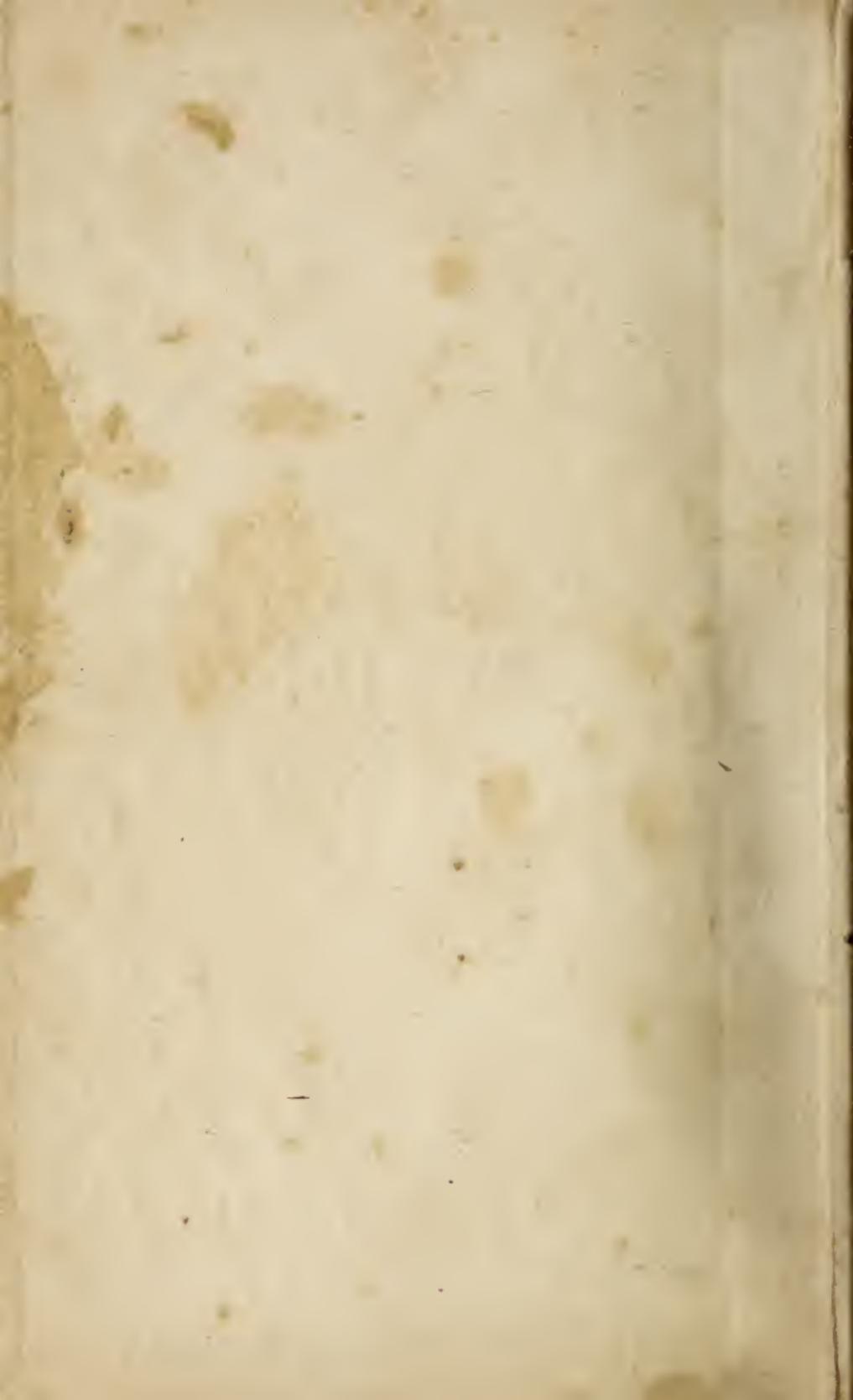


THE
ANXIOUS
BENCH.



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A TRACT FOR THE TIMES.

THE

A N X I O U S B E N C H ,

BY

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PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE SEMINARY OF THE GER. REF. CHURCH

SECOND EDITION,

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

TEKEL.—*Daniel v. 27.*

CHAMBERSBURG, Pa.

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P R E F A C E.

In coming before the public with a *Second edition* of the *Anxious Bench*, it seems proper to introduce it with a short Preface.

The publication, as was to be expected, has produced considerable excitement. At least half a dozen of replies to it, shorter or longer, have been announced in different quarters, proceeding from no less than five different religious denominations. Various assaults, in addition to this, have been made upon it, from the pulpit; to say nothing of the innumerable reproaches it has been required to suffer, in a more private way.

All this however, calls for no very special notice, in return. I am sorry to say, that of all the published replies to the tract, which have come under my observation, not one is entitled to any respect, as an honest and intelligent argument on the other side. In no case, has the question at issue been fairly accepted and candidly met. I do not feel myself required at all then, to enter into a formal vindication of the tract, as assailed in those publications. I consider it to be in itself, a full and triumphant answer to all they contain against it, in the way of objection or reproach. If permitted to speak for itself, by being seriously and attentively read, it may safely be left to plead its own cause. In such circumstances, it would be idle to enter into a controversial review of the manifold misrepresentations, to which it has been subjected. The only proper reply to them, is a republication of the tract itself.

With the reproaches that have been showered upon me personally, in different quarters, I have not allowed myself to be much disturbed. I had looked for it all beforehand ; knowing well the spirit of the system, with which I was called to deal. I knew of course, that I should be calumniated as an enemy to revivals, and an opposer of vital godliness. But I felt satisfied at the same time, that the calumny would in due season correct itself, and recoil with disgrace on the heads of those from whom it might proceed. It has begun to do so already, and will continue to do so, no doubt, more and more.

Some have wondered, that I did not take more pains to define my position with regard to revivals, by writing a chapter on the subject, so as to cut off occasion for the reproach now mentioned. But this would have been, in some measure to justify and invite the wrong, which it was proposed to prevent. There is gross insolence in the assumption, that a man should at all *need* to vindicate himself in this way, in venturing to speak against the system of New Measures. And then, it is not by formal protestations, when all is done, that the point, in any such case, can be fully settled. A chapter on revivals would be of little account in my tract, if my own character, and the whole spirit of the tract itself, were not such as to show an honest zeal in favor of serious religion. The publications which have come out in reply to it, all affect an extraordinary interest in the subject of revivals, exhibited often with a very blustering air; but in the case of some of them, this pretension is utterly belied, to all who have the least amount of spiritual discernment, by the tone of feeling with which they are characterised throughout. They carry in them no savor at all of the wisdom, that cometh from above,

no sympathy whatever with the mind of Jesus Christ. The remark is made of *some* of these publications, not of the whole of them indiscriminately.

Nor would any special protestation in favor of revivals be of much account, to guard the tract from being perversely used, by those who are in fact opposed to this precious interest. The only true and proper provision against such abuse must be found, if it exist at all, in the general spirit of the tract itself. Let this be right, and it must be considered enough. It may be perverted still; but men can pervert the bible too, if they please.

Fears have been expressed, that in the present position of the German Churches particularly, the publication may operate disastrously upon the interests of vital godliness. But in my own view, there is no good reason for any such fears. I believe its operation has been salutary already, and trust it will be found more salutary still, in time to come. It has engaged attention extensively to the subject of which it treats, and is likely to go farther than anything that has appeared before, in correcting the confusion and mystification, in which it has been so unhappily involved, in certain parts of the country, to the great prejudice of religion. It may be hoped now, that the subject of New Measures will be so examined and understood, that all shall come to make a proper distinction, between the system of the Anxious Bench, and the power of evangelical godliness, working in its true forms. In the case of the German Churches, this would be a result of the very highest consequence. If the present tract may open the way for its accomplishment, its mission will be one in which all the friends of true religion in these Churches will have occasion to rejoice.

But instead of lending their help to secure this most desirable object, the friends of the Anxious Bench seem concerned, to maintain as long as possible the very mystification, that stands in its way. They tell us, we must not speak against New Measures, because this term is made to include, in some parts of the country, revivals and other kindred interests; and then, when we propose to correct this gross mistake, by proper instruction, they set themselves with all their might to counteract the attempt, and insist that the people shall be suffered to confound these different forms of religion as before. Those who act thus, are themselves enemies in fact to the cause of revivals. From no other quarter, has it been made to suffer so seriously. Its greatest misfortune is, that it should lie at the mercy of such hands.

It is with a very bad grace, that reference is made occasionally by some, to the idea of a *foreign* spirit in the tract, as related to the German Churches. It is in full sympathy with the true life of these Churches, as it stood in the beginning. The charge of seeking to force a foreign spirit on them, lies with clear right against the other side. The system of New Measures has no affinity whatever, with the life of the Reformation, as embodied in the *Augsburgh Confession* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. It could not have found any favor in the eyes of Zuingli or Calvin. Luther would have denounced it, in the most unmerciful terms. His soul was too large, too deep, too free, to hold communion with a style of religion so mechanical and shallow. Those who are actively laboring to bring the Church of Luther, in this country, into subjection to the system, cannot be said to be true to his memory or name. The challenge, *Why are you a Lutheran?* is one which they would

do well seriously to consider. It is most certain, that the interest they are pushing forward, in this view, is not Lutheranism, in any sense that agrees with the true historical life of the Church. It involves a different theory of religion, that stands in no fellowship with the views, either of the fathers and founders of the Church, or of its most evangelical representatives in modern Germany. It is another element altogether that surrounds us, in the writings of such men as Olshausen, Tholuck, Sartorius, and Neander. The system in question, is in its principle and soul neither Calvinism nor Lutheranism, but Wesleyan *Methodism*. Those who are urging it upon the old German Churches, are in fact doing as much as they can, to turn them over into the arms of Methodism. This may be done, without any change of denominational name. Already the *life* of Methodism, in this country, is actively at work among other sects, which own no fellowship with it in form. So in the present case, names may continue to stand as before; but they will be only as the garnished sepulchres of a glory, that belonged to other days.

But is not Methodism, christianity? And is it not better that the German Churches should rise in this form, than not rise at all? Most certainly so, I reply, if that be the only alternative. But that is *not* the only alternative. Their resurrection may just as well take place, in the type of their own true, original, glorious life, as it is still to be found enshrined in their symbolical books. And whatever there may be that is good in Methodism, this life of the Reformation I affirm to be immeasurably more excellent and sound. Wesley was a small man as compared with Melancthon. Olshausen, with all his mysticism, is a commentator of the inmost sanctuary in

comparison with Adam Clark. If the original, distinctive life of the Churches of the Reformation, be not the object to be reached after, in the efforts that are made to build up the interests of German Christianity, in this country, it were better to say so at once openly and plainly. If we *must* have Methodism, let us have it, under its own proper title, and in its own proper shape. Why keep up the walls of denominational partition, in such a case, with no distinctive spiritual being to uphold or protect? A sect without a soul, has no right to live. Zeal for a separate denominational name, that utters no separate religious *idea*, is the very essence of sectarian bigotry and schism.

In opposing the Anxious Bench, I mean no disrespect of course to the many excellent men, in different Churches, who have given it their countenance. This has been done by some of the best ministers in the land, for whom I entertain the very highest regard. Not a few are to be found, who themselves condemn their own former judgment, in so doing; which does not imply surely any want of proper *self*-respect. The *system* of the Anxious Bench, in its full development, is one which these persons have always disapproved; only they have not considered this particular measure to be a part of the system. That this should be the case need not seem strange; for in the view of the measure here taken, it is supposed to be in its simple form, on the bright side of this system, and close upon the boundary that separates it from the territory of truth. The tract exhibits the measure in this view, not as the origin of the system historically, not as necessarily conducting in all cases to worse things that lie beyond; but as constitutionally involving the principle of those worse things, under the

least startling form, and legitimately opening the way for their introduction, if circumstances should permit. It would seem to show the correctness of this view, that while the answers to the tract protest against it, as a false and arbitrary classification, they all conform to it notwithstanding, in spite of themselves, in a practical way. They defend the use of the bench as the Thermopylæ of New Measures; and their argument, such as it is, has just as much force to justify the system in full, as it has to justify this measure in particular. An effort is made indeed to mystify the subject, by dragging into connection with it interests of a different order altogether; but still it is plain enough, that this is done with violence, and the controversy falls back always in the end, to its proper limits.

The abuse of a thing, it is said, is no argument against its proper use; and therefore the object, in the present case, should be to reform and regulate, rather than to abolish. To this I reply, the whole system contemplated in the tract is an abuse, from which it is of the utmost importance that the worship of the sanctuary, and the cause of revivals, should be rescued. Belonging as it does to this system, then, and contributing to its support, the Anxious Bench is a nuisance, that can never be fully abated except by its entire removal. Its tendencies, as shown in the tract, are decidedly bad, without any compensation of a solid kind. It may be used with moderation; but it will stand still in the same relation to the system it represents, that moderate drinking holds to intemperance in its more advanced forms. Popery started, in the beginning, under forms apparently the most innocent and safe. What might seem to be, for instance, more rational and becoming than the *sign of the cross*, as used by christians, on all occasions, in

the early Church? And yet, when the corruptions of Rome were thrown off by the protestant world, in the 16th century, this and other similar forms were required to pass away with the general mass. And why is it that the sign of the cross, as once used, is now counted a dangerous superstition, not to be permitted among protestants? Simply, because it falls naturally over to that vast system of abuses, of which it forms a part in the Romish Church. Thus it *represents* that system, and furnishes a specimen of it constitutionally, under the most plausible shape. Such is the position of the Anxious Bench, as a particular measure, in the general case now under consideration. It is just as easy to conceive of a judicious and salutary use of the sign of the cross, as it is to conceive of a judicious and salutary use of the anxious bench; and I have no doubt at all, but that the first has been owned and blessed of God full as extensively, to say the least, as this has ever been the case with the last.

J. W. N.

Mercersburg, Jan. 1844.

CHAPTER I.

Design of the Tract.—Occasion for inquiry.—Importance and solemnity of the subject.

It is proposed to institute a free inquiry into the merits of the **ANXIOUS BENCH**, as it has been enlisted extensively of late years in the service of religion. My object will be to show, that the measure is adapted to obstruct rather than to promote the progress of true godliness, and that it deserves to be discouraged on this account.

No one needs to be informed what is meant by the *Anxious Bench*. Its nature and design have come to be as familiar to most people, as the nature and design of the Pulpit itself. Even among those who dislike it, there are few perhaps, who have not had the opportunity, at one time or another, of witnessing its operation, while all are well acquainted with it at least in the way of description and report.

It will be understood, that the Anxious Bench is made to stand, in this case, as the type and representative of the entire system of what are technically denominated in our day, "*New Measures.*" It is not meant by this, of course, that it is so bound to the system, as never to be sepa-

rated from other parts of it, in actual practice. It may be in use where no new measures besides are tolerated ; and it is possible, on the other hand, that it may not be employed by some, who in other respects are wholly in this interest. But still, it may very fairly be exhibited, as a type of the system at large. These measures form properly a *system* ; and it is only in this view, that it is possible to estimate rightly their nature and character. It is not uncommon, to class with them things of a different nature altogether ; and then advantage is taken of the confusion thus produced, to evade the point of objections urged against new measures in the proper sense. This however, is sophistry, of a very shallow order. The idea of *New Measures*, is just as well defined in itself, and as generally intelligible, in the American Church, as the idea of popery, methodism, presbyterianism, or almost anything else of the same general character that might be named. It is only by a gross and palpable abuse, that some wish to make it include the best things in the Church. New measures, in the technical modern sense, form a particular system, involving a certain theory of religious action, and characterised by a distinctive life, which is by no means difficult to understand. Of this system the Anxious Bench is a proper representative. It opens the way naturally to other forms of aberration, in the same direction, and may be regarded in this view, as the threshhold of all that is found to follow, quite out to the extreme verge of fanati-

cism and rant. The measure belongs to the system, not in name simply, but in its life and spirit. At the same time, it is the most favorable aspect, in which the cause of New Measures can be presented to our view. The simple Anxious Bench, as it is often used in a sober way, is the most moderate and plausible shape the system can well take. If this then be found unworthy of confidence, the whole system will be shorn of its title to confidence, at the same time. If the Anxious Bench can claim no indulgence, it must be idle to put in a plea for its kindred measures. All *beyond* this is only something worse.

It is well too, that we can thus deal with our subject. If there be no room, as some pretend, for treating it in a clear and satisfactory way, under the title of New Measures, by reason of the confusion with which that term is used, it is so much the more important that we should substitute the particular for the general; and we have reason to congratulate ourselves, on finding a single, well known form of action, that can be taken fairly as the representative of the whole system. In this way, our argument will not be abstract and vague, but pointed and clear. Whatever dust it might be contrived to raise, with regard to the proper sense of the term, *New Measures*, all know at least the meaning of the *Anxious Bench*. Here then we have a tangible, concrete subject, with which to deal. Let it serve as a specimen of the system to which it belongs. In this way, the system is characterised and distinguished. It includes things of the

same general constitution and spirit, with the Anxious Bench. In trying the merits of this, we try at the same time all these kindred practices and nothing more.* If any choose to incorporate with *their* idea of New Measures, things of a different constitution and spirit entirely, it cannot be helped. But they can have no right to force any view of this sort upon the present argument. Our business is with New Measures, in the proper sense ; and that we may not seem to run uncertainly, or beat the air, we characterise the system by one of its most familiar exhibitions. It stands before us in the type of the Anxious Bench.

Here too is the proper point, for grappling with the heresy of New Measures. It can answer no purpose to discountenance the system in general, if we lend our influence, theoretically or practically to uphold a measure, forming like this a legitimate stepping stone to all the system is found to embrace. No satisfactory line can be drawn between this and the more advanced forms of extravagance, for which it prepares the way. They will be found to involve, in the end,

* "How can the import of this measure exhibit the character of protracted meetings, both which in many German churches are well known to be included in their idea of New Measures?" *Luth. Obs.* Nov. 17, 1843. Of a truth, it may be replied, not very well ; and for this reason precisely, it is made to stand here as the representative of the system to which it of right belongs, that every body may be able at once to see and understand that prayer meetings, protracted meetings, and other interests of the same complexion, come not in any sense within the scope of the present inquiry.

the same principle. That is a false position therefore, by which some excellent men allow themselves to speak freely against noise and disorder and bodily exercises in public worship, under other forms, while at the same time the Anxious Bench is not only spared, but treated with honor and confidence, as though it had come to form part of the accredited and regular service of God's House. Men who occupy this position, may preach or write an abundance of wholesome advice on the subject of false excitement in religion; but their advice is not likely to carry much weight with it in the end, as not going after all to the ground of the error against which it is directed. If we would utter an intelligible and consistent testimony against New Measures, we must make no exception, openly or tacitly, in favor of the Anxious Bench. Here precisely is the proper point, at which to grapple with the whole system.

There is occasion for the inquiry here proposed. It is true indeed, that throughout a large portion of the country the Anxious Bench, after having enjoyed a brief reputation, has fallen into discredit. It has been tried, and found wanting; and it might have been trusted that this experiment would be sufficient to drive it completely out of use. But unfortunately this has not been the case. Over a wide section of the land, we find it still holding its ground, without any regard to the disgrace with which it has been overtaken in the North and East. Peculiar cir-

cumstances have conspired to promote its credit, on this field.

It is within the range particularly of the German Churches, that a new life may be said to have been communicated latterly to the system of New Measures. No field is more interesting at this time, than that which is comprehended within these limits. A vast moral change is going forward upon it, involving consequences that no man can properly calculate. From various causes, a new feeling is at work everywhere on the subject of religion. As usual, the old struggles to maintain itself in opposition to the new, and a strong tendency to become extreme is created on both sides. The general mind unhappily has not been furnished thus far with proper protection and guidance, in the way of full religious teaching ; and the result is that in these interesting circumstances it has become exposed more or less, at almost every point, to those wild fanatical influences, which in this country are sure to come in like a desolating flood wherever they can find room. Upstart sects have set themselves to take possession if possible of the entire field in this way, on the principle that the old organizations are corrupt and deserve to be destroyed. Their reliance of course in this work of reformation, is placed largely on New Measures ! Thus a whole Babel of extravagance has been let loose upon the community, far and wide, in the name of religion, one sect vieing with another in the measure of its irregularities. In these circumstances, it has not been easy for

the friends of earnest piety always in the regular churches, to abide by the ancient landmarks of truth and order. The temptation has been strong to fall in, at least to some extent, with the tide of fanaticism, as the only way of making war successfully on the dead formality that stared them in the face in one direction, and the only way of counteracting the proselyting zeal of these noisy sects in the other.

This and other considerations have had the effect of opening the way for the use of New Measures, to some extent in the German Reformed Church, and to a much greater in the Lutheran. It is well known that a large division of this last denomination, has identified itself openly and zealously with the system, both in doctrine and practice. The *Lutheran Observer*, which has a wide circulation and great influence, has lent all its authority to recommend and support the Anxious Bench with its accompaniments, taking every occasion to speak in its favor and making continually the most of its results. The "revivals" of the Church latterly have been very generally carried forward with the use of New Measures, as may be perceived from the reports of them published from time to time in the *Observer*. The great awakening of last winter, pronounced by the editor of that paper to have been probably the greatest since the days of the Apostles, seems almost everywhere to have involved the free use of this method. Thus ministers and congregations have become extensively committed in its favor; so that with many

the use of the Anxious Bench, and a zeal for evangelical godliness, are considered to be very much the same thing. It might seem indeed as though all the interests of religion, in the case of the German community, were to the view of a large class, suspended on the triumphant progress of New Measures.* These are with them emphatically the “great power of God,” which may be expected to turn and overturn, till old things shall fairly pass away and all things become new. And it must be acknowledged, that the system bids fair at present to go on conquering and to conquer, in its own style, within the limits at least of this widely extended and venerable denomination. It seems to bear down, more and more, all opposition. It has become an interest too strong, to be resisted or controled. What are to be its ultimate issues and results, time only can reveal.

All this is within the reach of the most common observation. And no one reflecting on the

* “And let me tell you, Sir, that whatever Prof. NEVIN may, (in the abstraction of his study,) have written to the contrary, I am nevertheless strongly convinced, as a pastor, that the so-called ‘anxious bench’ is the lever of Archimedes, which by the blessing of God can raise our German Churches to that degree of respectability and prosperity in the religious world, which they ought to enjoy. *Correspondence of the Luth. Obs.* Nov. 17, 1843.

“Such measures are usually inseparable from great revivals, and if the great luminaryes in the Church set themselves up against them, why they must be content to abide the consequences. By the judicious use of such measures, the millennium must be accelerated and introduced; &c.”—*Luth. Obs.* Jan. 26, 1844. . .

actual state of things at this time, on the field occupied by the German Churches, can well fail to perceive, that there is full occasion for calling attention to the subject which it is here proposed to consider. An inquiry into the merits of the Anxious Bench, and the system to which it belongs, is not only seasonable and fit in the circumstances of the time, but loudly called for on every side. It is no small question, that is involved in the case. The bearing of it upon the interests of religion in the German Churches, is of fundamental and vital importance. A crisis has evidently been reached in the history of these Churches ; and one of the most serious points involved in it, is precisely this question of New Measures. Let this system prevail and rule with permanent sway, and the result of the religious movement which is now in progress, will be something widely different from what it would have been under other auspices. The old regular organizations, if they continue to exist at all, will not be the same Churches. Their entire complexion and history, in time to come, will be shaped by the course of things with regard to this point. In this view, the march of New Measures at the present time, may well challenge our anxious and solemn regard. It is an interest of no common magnitude, portentous in its aspect, and pregnant with consequences of vast account. The system is moving forward in full strength, and putting forth its pretensions in the boldest style on all sides. Surely we have a right, and may well feel it a

duty, in such a case, to institute an examination into its merits.

Nor is it any reason for silence in the case, that we may have suffered as yet comparatively little in our own denomination, from the use of New Measures. We may congratulate ourselves that we have been thus favored, and that the impression seems to be steadily growing that they ought not to be encouraged in our communion. Still, linked together as the German Churches are throughout the land, we have reason to be jealous here of influences, that must in the nature of the case act upon us from without. In such circumstances there is occasion, and at the same time room, for consideration. It might answer little purpose to interpose remonstrance or inquiry, if the rage for New Measures were fairly let loose, as a sweeping wind, within our borders. It were idle to bespeak attention from the rolling whirlwind. But with the whirlwind in full view, we may be exhorted reasonably to consider and stand back from its destructive path. We are not yet committed to the cause of New Measures, in any respect. We are still free to reject or embrace them, as the interests of the Church, on calm reflection, may be found to require. In such circumstances precisely, may it be counted in all respects proper to subject the system to a serious examination.

It has been sometimes intimated, that it is not safe to oppose and condemn the use of New Measures, because of their connections and purpose. Their relation to the cause of revivals, is

supposed to invest them with a sort of sacred character, which the friends of religion should at least respect, even if they may not be able in all cases, to approve. The system has taken hold of the "horns of the altar," and it seems to some like sacrilege to fall upon it there, or to force it away for the purposes of justice to any other place. It is a serious thing, we are told, to find fault with any movement, that claims to be animated by the Spirit of God. By so doing, we render it questionable whether we have ourselves any proper sympathy with revivals, and furnish occasion to the world also to blaspheme and oppose everything of the kind. But this is tyrannical enough, to take for granted the main point in dispute, and then employ it as a consideration to repress inquiry or to silence objection. If New Measures can be shown to proceed from the Holy Ghost, or to be identified in any view with the cause of revivals, they may well demand our reverence and respect. If they can be shown even to be of *adiaphorous* character with regard to religion, harmless at least if not positively helpful to the Spirit's work, they may then put in a reasonable plea to be tolerated in silence, if not absolutely approved. But neither the one nor the other of these positions can be successfully maintained. It is a mere trick unworthy of the gospel, for any one to confound with the sacred idea of a revival, things that do not belong to it in truth at all, for the purpose of compelling a judgment in their favor. The very design of the inquiry now proposed, is to

show that the Anxious Bench, and the system to which it belongs, have no claim to be considered either salutary or safe, in the service of religion. It is believed, that instead of promoting the cause of true vital godliness, they are adapted to hinder its progress. The whole system is considered to be full of peril, for the most precious interests of the Church. And why then should there be any reserve, in treating the subject with such freedom as it may seem to require ? We may well feel indeed that the subject is solemn. All that relates to the interests of revivals, and the welfare of souls, is solemn ; and it becomes us to approach it in a serious way. But this is no reason, why we should close our eyes against the truth, or refuse to call things by their proper names. This would be to trifle with sacred things truly.

And it should be borne in mind, that the danger against which we need to be warned in this case, is not confined by any means to one side. It is a serious thing to profane the worship of God, by offering upon his altar strange fire. Those who recommend and practice New Measures, should see well to it, that they be not themselves chargeable with the very sin, which they are too prone to charge upon such as withstand their views. It is surely not a case, in which men can be justified in taking up a judgment lightly, and with little or no reflection. Mighty interests are concerned in the question, whether such means should be employed in the service of God's sanctuary or not. A great re-

sponsibility is involved in urging the system upon a congregation, or in trying to give it currency and authority in a religious community. If it should be found after all, to be *not* the wisdom and power of God unto salvation, but the fruitful source of error and confusion in religion, an occasion of reproach to the gospel and of ruin to the souls of men, it would be a heavy account surely, to answer for any part taken in its favor.

It is truly strange, how onesided the patrons of this system show themselves, as a general thing, in their views and feelings with regard to the point now presented. They affect an extraordinary interest in the cause of revivals, and seem to have a pious dread of sinning against it in any way. But the danger of doing so, is all, to their view, in one direction. The idea of opposing the work of God, is terrible. Whatever claims to be his work then, must be respected and reverenced. No matter what irregularities are attached to it, so long as it stands before us in the holy garb of a revival, it is counted unsafe to call it to account. The maxim, *Prove all things*, must be discarded, as well as the caution, *Believe not every spirit*. No room must be allowed to criticism, where the object proposed is to rescue souls from hell. To stand upon points of order in such a case, is to clog the chariot wheels of salvation. Meanwhile the disastrous consequences of false excitement, in the name of religion, are entirely overlooked. No account is made comparatively, of the dan-

ger of bringing both the truth and power of God into discredit, by countenancing pretensions to the name of a revival where the thing itself is not present. The danger itself is by no means imaginary. Spurious excitements are natural and common. Gross irregularity and extravagance, carried often to the point of downright profanity, are actually at work, in connection with such excitements, on all sides. The whole interest of revivals is endangered, by the assumption impudently put forward, that these revolting excesses belong to the system. False and ruinous views of religion, are widely disseminated. Thousands of souls are deceived into a false hope. Vast obstructions are thrown in the way of true godliness. But of all this, no account is made by those who are so sensitively jealous of danger on the other side. The only alternative they seem to see, is *Action* or *No-action*. But the difference between *right* action and *wrong* action, one would think, is full as important, to say the least, as the difference between action and no action.

We are told however, that the term "*New Measures*" is vague, covering in the view of some more than it covers in the view of others; so that there is danger of encouraging prejudice and opposition against the best things, as well as the worst, in venturing to criticise and censure the general system. In the German community in particular, it is well known that great confusion prevails with regard to the subject, in this view. With many, all active efforts in fa-

vor of serious evangelical piety, are branded with the reproach of new measures. Protracted meetings, prayer meetings, the doctrine of the new birth, special efforts for the salvation of sinners, revivals in the true and proper sense, tract societies, missionary societies, and benevolent operations, generally, all are regarded with suspicion, or it may be actually opposed, as belonging to the same system of extravagance, that includes the Anxious Bench and its natural connections. To oppose the latter then, we are told is virtually to oppose the former. People will not distinguish. By exposing the nakedness of the Anxious Bench, we must expect to strengthen the hands of those who cry out against all active religion. Better to be silent, than to incur so heavy a responsibility. Especially at this juncture should we observe such sacred caution, it is intimated, when the German Churches are waking from the sleep of years, and passing the crisis of a great spiritual revolution, whose consequences no one can measure.

Most certainly, in such circumstances, caution does become us all. We should tremble, to touch the ark of God with unhallowed hand. It were only to be wished, that this might be seriously laid to heart, by the champions of the Anxious Bench themselves, as well as by others.

It has been already stated, that the Anxious Bench is made the direct object of regard in this tract, rather than New Measures in general, for the very purpose of cutting off occasion, as much as may be, from those who seek occasion, for

confounding in this way things that are entirely distinct. The particular is made to stand for the general, in the way of specimen or type, so as to exclude all that is not of the same complexion and spirit. If any choose notwithstanding to take the idea of New Measures in a wider sense, they have a right to please themselves in so doing, if they see proper; but they can have no right surely to obtrude their own arbitrary view on the present discussion. There is a broad difference between New Measures in the one sense, and New Measures in the other sense. It is overbearing impudence to pretend, that a protracted meeting, or a meeting for social prayer, is of the same character with the anxious bench, or the various devices for theatrical effect with which this is so frequently linked. Such meetings lie in the very conception of Christian worship, and are as old as the Church. The assertion sometimes heard, that the idea of protracted meetings, now so familiar and so generally approved, is one of recent origin, for which we are indebted to the system of New Measures, serves only to expose the ignorance of those by whom it is made. It is no less an abuse of terms, as well as of common sense, to include in this system tract societies, the cause of missions, and the benevolent agencies in general, by which the Church is endeavoring to diffuse the knowledge of the truth throughout the world. All these things are natural, direct utterances of the spirit of Christianity itself, and have no affinity whatever with the order of ac-

tion represented by the Anxious Bench. The same thing may be said of revivals. They are as old as the gospel itself. Special effusions of the Spirit, the Church has a right to expect in every age, in proportion as she is found faithful to God's covenant; and where such effusions take place, an extraordinary use of the ordinary means of grace will appear, as a matter of course. But still a revival is one thing, and a Phrygian dance another; even though the Phrygian dance should be baptized into Christian Montanism. Life implies action, but all action is not life. It is sheer impudence to say, that new measures and revival measures are the same thing.

And there is good reason to believe, that the confusion which is said to prevail with regard to the whole subject, is much less in fact than is sometimes represented. As a general thing, people know very well that there is no affinity or connection, between the system represented by the Anxious Bench, and such evangelical interests as have now been mentioned. Even in those sections, where it has been found convenient to stretch the idea of New Measures over this hallowed territory, there is a better knowledge of the true state of the case probably than is often supposed.

But allowing the confusion to be as complete, among the German Churches, as it is represented, shall no effort be made to correct it, and put things in their proper light? Admit that the best practices, and most important interests, are in the eyes of many identified with the system

of New Measures, in the proper sense, so that to assault the latter is considered an assault at the same time upon the former; still is that a reason for sparing and sheltering the system, under its own bad form? Is there no help for the German Churches, in this predicament? Must they have revivals, in the way of the Anxious Bench, or no revivals at all? Must it be with them Finneyism, Methodism, Winebrennerism, or open war with serious religion, and the spirit of missions, under every form? Is the necessary alternative, in their case, quackery or death? Rather, in these circumstances, it becomes a solemn duty to take the difficulty by the horns, and reduce it to its proper posture. We owe it to the German Churches, not to suffer things so different, in a case of such vast moment, to be so deplorably confounded. The case is one that calls loudly for light, and it is high time that light should be extended to it without reserve. If it be a reigning error, to involve light and darkness in this way, under a common term, in the same sweeping censure, that is not a reason surely why we should try to uphold the darkness for the sake of the light, but a sacred requisition upon us rather, to insist on a clear, full discrimination of the one element from the other. If Finneyism and Winebrennerism, the anxious bench, revival machinery, solemn tricks for effect, decision displays at the bidding of the preacher, genuflections and prostrations in the aisle or around the altar, noise and disorder, extravagance and rant, mechanical conversions,

justification by feeling rather than faith, and encouragement ministered to all fanatical impressions ; if these things, and things in the same line indefinitely, have no connection in fact with true serious religion and the cause of revivals, but tend only to bring them into discredit, let the fact be openly proclaimed. Only in this way, may it be hoped that the reproach put upon revivals and other evangelical interests by some, under cover of their pretended connection with this system of New Measures in the true sense, will be in due time fairly rolled away.

The fact, that a crisis has come in the history of the German Churches, and that they are waking to the consciousness of a new life with regard to religion, only makes it the more important, that this subject should *not* be suffered to rest in vague confusion. It is a popish maxim, by which ignorance is made to be the mother of devotion. We say rather, Let there be light. The cause of the Reformation was more endangered by its own caricature, in the wild fanaticism of the Annabaptists, than by all the opposition of Rome. Luther saved it, not by truckling compromise, but by boldly facing and unmasking the false spirit, so that all the world might see, that *Lutheran* Christianity was one thing, and wild Phrygian Montanism, with its pretended inspiration, quite another. So in the present crisis, the salvation of the old German Churches in this country is to be accomplished, not by encouraging them to "believe every spirit," but by engaging them, if possible, to "try the spir-

its, whether they be of God." Let things that are wrong be called by their right names, and separated from things that are right.

A heavy responsibility, in this case, rests upon the friends of New Measures. The circulation of spurious coin, in the name of money, brings the genuine currency into discredit. So also the surest way to create and cherish prejudice against true piety, is to identify it with counterfeit pretences to its name. Popery, in popish countries, is the fruitful source of infidelity. So in the case before us, it is sufficiently clear, that the zeal which the sticklers for the system of the Anxious Bench display, in pressing their irregularities on the Church as a necessary part of the life and power of Christianity, is doing more at present than any other cause, to promote the unhappy prejudice that is found to prevail, in certain quarters, against this interest in its true form. Many are led honestly to confound the one order of things with the other; and still more, no doubt, willingly accept the opportunity thus furnished, to strengthen themselves in their opposition to evangelical interests, under a plausible plea, against their own better knowledge. In either case, we see the mischievous force of the false issue, which the question of New Measures has been made to involve. The Anxious Bench, and its kindred extravagances, may be held justly responsible for a vast amount of evil, in this view. As a caricature always wrongs the original it is made falsely to represent, so has this spurious system,

officially usurping a name and place not properly its own, contributed in no small degree to bring serious religion itself into discredit, obscuring its true form, and inviting towards it prejudices that might otherwise have had no place. It has much to answer for, in the occasion it has given, and is giving still, for the name of God to be blasphemed, and the sacred cause of revivals to be vilified and opposed.

CHAPTER II.

The merits of the Anxious Bench not to be measured by its popularity; nor by its seeming success.—Circumstances in which it is found to prevail.—No spiritual force required to give it effect.

The *Popularity* of the Anxious Bench proves nothing in its favor.* We find it, to be sure, extensively in vogue, and with a large portion of the community in high honor. There are whole sects that seem to have no conception of any thing like a vigorous life in the Church,

* "It proves nothing *against* it," we are told from the other side. The remark is most true; but most foreign at the same time from the point, so far as the position of the tract is concerned. The object of this chapter is, not to present any positive argument against the Bench, but simply to undermine certain presumptions in its favor, which are known to stand in the way of a calm and dispassionate consideration of its merits, as afterwards examined. The argument here is *negative*, not positive. The patrons of the system, it is plain, make much account of its popularity, of the success with which it seems to be attended, and of the power it is supposed to manifest on the part of those who can use it with effect. In the present chapter, it is attempted to show simply, that popularity and apparent success prove nothing, and that the measure is of such a character as to call for no particular moral force to give it effect. In the following chapter, the argument becomes *positive*, showing that there is actual weakness and quackery at the bottom of the whole system.

without its presence. And beyond the range of these, scores of ministers and congregations are found, who glory in it as the very "gate of heaven," and consider it no less essential than the pulpit itself to the progress of any considerable revival. During the last winter, as already mentioned, there were places, where the spirit of the Anxious Bench might be said to carry all before it; and it is likely it will be so again, during the winter that is to come.

But all who are at all acquainted with the world, know, that the worst things *may* thus run for a season and be glorified, in the popular mind. And especially is this the case, where they hold their existence in the element of excitement, and connect themselves with religion, the deepest and most universal of all human interests. No weight of fashion enlisted in favor of the Anxious Bench can deserve to be much respected, in such a trial of its merits as we are here called to make.

It should be remembered however, that this popularity, such as it is, is in a certain sense but the echo of a sound which has already ceased to be heard. Whatever may be the pretensions of the Anxious Bench, on the field we are now contemplating, it is after all a stale interest, so far as the Church at large is concerned. Not many years since, it stood in very considerable credit in different parts of the Presbyterian Church, and over a large portion of New England. But on this ground, the thing has fairly exploded. It has been tried and found wanting. Here and

there, it may still be held in honor. But in a general view, even those who were formerly its friends have come to look upon it with distrust, and are no longer willing to give it their countenance. As with general consent, throughout New England and New York, the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches have abandoned the use of the Anxious Bench for "a more excellent way."* With all its popularity then where it now prevails, it is after all a stale interest, worn threadbare and flung aside, in a different quarter of the religious world. In these circumstances, no great account is to be made of its present credit, in any view.

Nothing can be argued again in favor of the

* This has been contradicted; with more courage however, than wisdom. It is notorious to all who know anything about the subject, that the system of New Measures, in the sense of the present tract, as represented some years since in the North by such men as Blanchard and Finney, has latterly fallen into discredit and general disuse, throughout the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches. They still cherish of course prayer meetings, protracted meetings, and revivals; and it is quite possible that a number of ministers may still have recourse to the anxious bench, as a particular measure, at certain times; but the *system*, to which this measure of right belongs, is no longer in vogue. By general consent, the churches have fallen back upon the evangelical method, to which the use of the anxious bench can adhere only as an accident, if it adhere at all. The revivals of last winter, in the North, according to the testimony furnished concerning them, in the New York Observer, were of a wholly different stamp, from those of Mr. Finney's school, in former years. These last had strength; but it was such as a wasting fever imparts to a sick man, opening the way for a long prostration afterwards. The revivals of the past winter, it may be trusted, have been the first fruits only of the quiet and enduring vigor, that springs from renovated health.

Anxious Bench, from the *Success*, with which it may appear to be employed in the service of religion. This is often appealed to for this purpose. We are referred triumphantly to the actual results of the system, as tried in different places. We are told of hundreds awakened and converted in connection with its use. God, it is said, has owned it, and impressed his seal upon it, by working through it mightily as a means of salvation; and if he choose to honor it in this way, who are we that we should find fault or condemn?* We should rejoice to see souls brought into the kingdom, in any way. We should be willing to make room, in such a case, for the manifold grace of God, allowing it to have free course in any channel through which it is found to flow, and not seeking to force it into conformity with our own narrow views. All this carries with it a plausible sound. But after all, the representation is entitled to no respect.

In the first place, to draw an argument for the Anxious Bench from its immediate visible effects, is to take for granted that these are worth all they claim to be worth. We are pointed to powerful awakenings, of which it is considered to be the very soul. We are referred to scores and hundreds of conversions, effected directly or

* "Who can behold a congregation of christians wrestling for an altar-full of penitent, anxious sinners, and witness the success of such instrumentality, and say, this is ignorance or fanaticism? God blesses only one way, which is the right way; he has blessed this way, therefore it is the right way." —*Correspondence of the Luth. Observer*, Feb. 17, 1843.

indirectly by its means. But who shall assure us, that all this deserves to be regarded with confidence, as the genuine fruit of religion? It is marvellous credulity, to take every excitement in the name of religion, for the work of God's Spirit. It is an enormous demand on our charity, when we are asked to accept in mass, as true and solid, the wholesale conversions that are made in this way. It will soon be made to appear, that there is the greatest reason for caution and distrust, with regard to this point. No doubt the use of the Anxious Bench may be found associated, in certain cases, with revivals, the fruits of which are worthy of all confidence. But this character they will have, through the force of a different system, that would have been just as complete without any such accompaniment. In such cases, the revival may be said to prevail, *inspite of* the new measures with which it is encumbered. On the other hand, in proportion as the spirit of such measures is found to animate and rule the occasion, there will be reason to regard the whole course of things with doubt. One thing is most certain. Spurious revivals are common, and as the fruit of them, false conversions lamentably abound. An Anxious Bench may be crowded, where no divine influence whatever is felt. A whole congregation may be moved with excitement, and yet be losing at the very time more than is gained in a religious point of view. Hundreds may be carried *through* the process of anxious bench conversion, and yet their last state may be worse

than the first. It will not do to point us to immediate visible effects, to appearances on the spot, or to glowing reports struck off from some heated imagination immediately after. Piles of copper, fresh from the mint, are after all something very different from piles of gold.

Again, it does not follow by any means that a thing is right and good, because it may be made subservient occasionally, in the hands of God, to a good end. Allow that the system represented by the Anxious Bench, has often had the effect of bringing souls by a true and saving change to Christ, and still it may deserve to be opposed and banished from the Church. God can cause the wrath and folly of man both to praise him, in such ways as to himself may seem best. And so, under the influence of his Spirit, he can make almost any occasion subservient to the awakening and conversion of a soul. But it would be wretched logic, to infer from this the propriety of employing every such occasion, with preparation and design, as a part of the regular work of the gospel. It is sometimes said indeed, that if only *some* souls are saved by the use of new measures, we ought thankfully to own their power, and give them our countenance; since even one soul is worth more than a world. But it should be remembered, that the salvation of a sinner may notwithstanding cost *too much!* If truth and righteousness are made to suffer for the purpose, more is lost than won by the result. We must not do *wrong*, even to gain a soul for heaven. And if for one

thus gained, ten should be virtually destroyed, by the very process employed to reach the point, who will say that such a method of promoting Christianity would deserve to be approved? There may be movements in the name of religion, and under the form of religion, and yielding to some extent the fruits of religion, which after all come from beneath and not from above. The history of the Church is full of instances, illustrating the truth of this remark.

Simeon, the Stylite, distinguished himself, in the fifth century, by taking his station on the top of a pillar, for the glory of God and the benefit of his own soul. This whimsical discipline he continued to observe for thirty seven years. Meanwhile he became an object of wide-spread veneration. Vast crowds came from a distance to gaze upon him, and hear him preach. The *measure* took with the people wonderfully. Thousands of heathen were converted, and baptized by his hand. Among these, it may be charitably trusted were some, whose conversion was inward and solid. God made use of Simeon's Pillar, to bring them to himself. The seal of his approbation might seem to have rested upon it, to an extraordinary extent. No wonder the device became popular. The quackery of the Pillar took possession of the Eastern world, and stood for centuries a monument of the folly that gave it birth. We laugh at it now; and yet it seemed a good thing in its time, and carried with it a weight of popularity such as no New Measure can boast of in the present day.

But why speak of Stylitism in particular? The whole system of monkery may be taken as an example, of the same force, on a larger scale. What a world of abominations has it not been found to embrace? And yet, under what plausible pretences, it sought the confidence of the Church, in the beginning! There were not wanting powerful reasons, to give it recommendation. The whole Christian world in fact fell into the snare. The interest became a torrent, before which no man was found able to stand. Most assuredly too, there was the life and power of religion, to some extent, at work in the movement. Monkery was to many in fact the means of conversion and salvation. And to this hour an argument might be framed in its favor, under this view, not less plausible, to say the least, than any that can be presented for the use of the Anxious Bench.

The Romish Church has always delighted in arrangements and services, animated with the same false spirit. In her penitential system, all pains have been taken to produce *effect* by means of outward postures and dress, till in the end, amid the solemn mummery, no room has been left for genuine penitence at all. Yet not a ceremony was ever introduced into the system, that did not seem to be recommended by some sound religious reason at the time. The same thing may be said of the Services of that Church generally.

In another sphere, look at *Millerism*. The error, as it has been zealously preached within

the past year, has no doubt had an awakening effect on the minds of many ; and some it may be trusted, have been actually conducted by means of it into the kingdom of God. But will any pretend to say that it deserves to be encouraged on this account ? It is said indeed, that such an idea has been occasionally thrown out. Only, however, where the judgment had been in some measure corrupted by the spirit of quackery previously at work. No morally sane mind could be willing for a moment, to patronize such a lie, on account of any apparently salutary effects it might be found to have in particular cases.

Let us not be told then, that the Anxious Bench is a godly interest, because many *seem* to be convicted by its means, and some are converted in fact. All this may be, and the general operation of the system remain notwithstanding intrinsically and permanently bad.

As a general thing, the movement of coming to the Anxious Bench, gives no proper representation of the religious feeling that may be actually at work in the congregation, at the time. It is always more or less theatrical, and often has no other character whatever. A sermon usually goes before. But frequently this has no felt relation at all to the subsequent excitement, so far as its actual contents are concerned. The writer was present, not a great while ago, as a stranger, in a church, where a preacher of some little note in connection with the subject of revivals, had been introduced, under the expectation and hope, that something of the kind might

be secured, at the time, by his instrumentality. The congregation had but little appearance of life at the beginning, and still less as the sermon drew towards a close. The truth is, it was a very dull discourse, at the best. The preacher was not well, and altogether he failed to make the least impression on the great body of his audience. A number were fairly asleep, and others were bordering on the same state. The preacher saw and felt, that he had preached without effect; and took occasion, after the sermon was properly ended, to express his regret in view of the fact, and to add a few valedictory remarks in the prospect of his leaving the place the next day, without any thought evidently of calling out the anxious, where not a trace of feeling had been discerned. But the new strain adopted at the close, served to rouse attention and create interest. The congregation put on a more wakeful aspect, and something like emotion could be perceived in the countenances of a few. The preacher took courage, and after a few minutes dared to try the Anxious Bench. As usual, the hymn was started, *Come humble sinner, &c.*, and carried through, with pauses, in which sinners present were urged and pressed to seek their salvation by coming forward. Soon a female was seen going to the place, then another, and another; till at last a whole seat was filled. One old lady rose, and moved around, trying to induce others to go forward. At the close of the meeting, I retired, wondering within myself that educated

men, as were both the preacher in this case and the pastor at his side, could so impose upon themselves, as to attach any importance to such a demonstration, in such circumstances. It was attempted to carry forward the work, by an appointment for the next evening. But on coming together at the time, it was found that it *would* not go forward, and so it was dropped altogether.

Commonly indeed, those who deal in the anxious seat, rely far less upon the presentation of truth to the understanding, than they do upon other influences, to bring persons forward. Pains are taken rather to raise the imagination, and confound the judgment. Exciting appeals are made to the principle of fear. Advantage is taken in every way of the senses and nerves. Especially the mysterious force of sympathy is enlisted in support of the measure, and made to tell in many cases with immense effect.

As might be expected accordingly, the most favorable subjects for the operation of the system, are persons in whom feelings prevail over judgment, and who are swayed by impulse more than reflection. In an enlightened, well instructed congregation, the anxious bench can never be generally popular. Where it is in full favor, a large proportion of those who are brought out by it, are females and persons who are quite young.* It often happens that the

* "Females and persons who are quite young have souls to be saved, as well as males and persons who are advanced in

“bench” is filled altogether with such cases, the greater part of them perhaps mere girls and boys. So where a community is characterised by a general ignorance with regard to the nature of true religion, the measure is frequently applied with great effect; and those precisely who are the most rude and uncultivated, are the most likely in such circumstances to come under its power.

It requires then no spiritual power to use the Anxious Bench with effect. To preach the truth effectually, a man must have a certain spiritual force in himself, which others are made to feel. But nothing of this sort is needed, to secure success here. The object sought is a mere outward demonstration on the subject of religion, which may be gained by other forms of influence, just as well. It shows no inward power whatever, to be able to move a congregation in this way. It can be done without eloquence, and calls for no particular earnestness or depth.

life; nay ‘mere girls and boys’ have an eternal interest pending.”—*Luth. Obs.* Dec. 29, 1843.

“And was not woman last at the cross, and first at the tomb of the Son of God?”—*Davis’ Plea*, p. 45.

“Low and jejune indeed must be the conception of a religion, which can allow a *divine* to attempt to destroy a “measure,” through which “*females, girls and boys*,” run to, as a means to enable them to flee the wrath to come.”—*Denig’s Strictures*, p. 26.

What a coincidence of judgment, among the critics of the tract, at this point! And what shall we say of the relevancy and honesty of the criticism itself, in view of the passage thus censured, as it actually stands, and taken in its plain sense? This is a fair specimen however, of a large part of all that has been *argued* against the tract, in these publications.

of thought. It is truly wonderful indeed, with how little qualification of intellect and soul a man may be fitted to carry all before him at certain times, and to show himself off to the eyes of a bewitched multitude as "the great power of God," by having recourse to new measures. He may be vulgar, coarse and dull, and so pointless and sapless in his ordinary pulpit services, that it will be a weariness to hear him ; and yet you shall find him, from time to time, throwing a whole community into excitement, gathering around him crowded houses night after night, and exercising as it might seem, for the space of three or four weeks, an irresistible sway, in favor of religion. Such cases are by no means uncommon. Some of the most successful practitioners in the art of the Anxious Bench show themselves lamentably defective in the power of serious godliness, as well as in mental cultivation generally. The general habit of their lives is worldly and vain, and their religion, apart from the occasional whirlwinds of excitement in which they are allowed to figure in their favorite way, may be said to be characteristically superficial and cold. Nay, the evidence may be palpable, that religion has nothing at all to do with the system, in cases where it is employed with the greatest apparent effect. Nothing is more common, than for those even who glory in the power of the Anxious Bench, as employed within their own communion, to look with entire distrust on its results as exhibited in the practice of other sects. What is trumpeted in the one case

as a glorious revival, is allowed to pass in the other without notice as at best a questionable excitement. In this way it is practically acknowledged, that the system does not necessarily involve spiritual power. It can be made to work as well in connection with error, as in connection with truth. It is as fully at the service of quackery and imposture, as it can be available in the cause of genuine religion. It is well adapted indeed to become the sport of quacks, under every name. All wild and fanatical sects employ it, with equal success. Campbellites, Winebrennerians, and Universalists, show the same power, when necessary, in producing revivals under this form. Millerism and Mormonism, it may be added, are just as capable of doing wonders in the same way; though the last has declared itself not favorable to the Anxious Bench, as interfering with regular and rational worship.

Nothing can be more precarious then, than the argument for this system, as drawn from its apparent effects and results. In the sphere of religion, as indeed in the world of life generally, the outward can have no value, except as it stands continually in the power of the inward. To estimate the force of appearances, we must try their moral constitution; and this always involves a reference to the source, from which they spring. A miracle, in the true sense, is not simply a prodigy, nakedly and separately considered. It must include a certain moral character. Especially there must be inward

freedom and divine strength in the person, from whom it proceeds. No wonder-works could authenticate the mission of a man pretending to come from God, who should display in all his movements an inward habit at war with the idea of religion. And just as little are we bound to respect, in the present case, the mere show of force, without regard to the agency by which it is exhibited. Those who deal in the Anxious Bench are accustomed to please themselves with the idea, that it is an argument of power on the part of their ministry, to be able in this way to produce a great outward effect.* This is considered sufficient, it might seem, apart from the personality of the preacher altogether, to authenticate his strength. But no judgment can be more superficial. The personality of the preacher, must ever condition and determine the character of his work. It were easy to give a score of living examples, in which the semblance of success on a large scale, in the use of this system at the present time, is at once belied by palpable defect here. The men are of such a spirit, that it is not possible to confide in-

* "Who ever dreamed, that a single invitation to penitents to come forward, and a personal conversation with them on their spiritual condition and duties demanded uncommon inward spiritual force?" Thus the editor of the Luth. Obs. Nov. 17, 1843, mystifying the point as usual. His colleague of Pittsburg however, comes up boldly to the mark. "A quack may preach a sermon and make a long prayer," he tells us; "but it takes something more than a Quack, so to preach the truth that sinners will immediately come forward to the anxious bench."—*Davis' Plea*, p. 32. Right bravely spoken; but the very dialect of Quackdom itself.

telligently in any results it may seem to reach, by their ministry. We are authorised before all examination, to pronounce them valueless and vain. So utterly weak, in this argument, is the appeal to *facts*, as managed frequently by superficial thinkers. In every view of the case, the fruits of the Anxious Bench must be received with great caution, while to a great extent they are entitled to no confidence whatever.

CHAPTER III.

Nature of Quackery.—To rely on forms or measures shows inward weakness.—“New Measures” a substitute for true strength.—Where they are in honor, ample space is found for novices and quacks.

It has been shown, that the successful use of the Anxious Bench calls for no spiritual power. It is within the reach of fanaticism and error, to be employed in their service, with as much facility as it may be enlisted in the service of truth. It is no argument of strength, as is often imagined, that a preacher is able to use such an agency with effect. I now go a step farther and pronounce it an argument of *spiritual weakness*, that he should find it either necessary or desirable to call in such help. There is a measure of quackery in the expedient, which always implies the want of strength, so far as it may be relied on at all, as being of material account, in carrying on the work of God.*

* It has been found convenient with some, it would seem, to misunderstand what is said of spiritual weakness and spiritual strength, in this part of the tract. They affect to take it as having respect to intellect, learning, eloquence, &c. ; as though it implied, that men of ordinary or small abilities

Quackery consists in pretension to an inward virtue or power, which is not possessed in fact, on the ground of a mere show of the strength which such power or virtue is supposed to include. The self-styled physician, who without any knowledge of the human frame, undertakes to cure diseases by a sovereign panacea, in the shape of fluid, powder, or pill, is a quack; and there is no doubt abundance of quackery in the medical profession, under more professional forms, where practice is conducted without any true professional insight and power. Such practice may at times seem eminently successful, and yet it is quackery notwithstanding. The same false show of power may, of course, come into view in every department of life. It makes up in fact a large part of the action and business of

are entitled to no respect in the Church; and so we are referred to Paul's "*Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, &c.* 1 Cor. i. 26-28, as a scriptural rebuke upon every such judgment. Thus also the editor of the Lutheran Observer, Jan. 5, 1844, lugs in, by the neck, a passage to the same purpose from President Edwards, to show that this "great master-spirit did not look upon the *inward weakness* of his co-workers as a matter of reproach." At the close of it, he gravely adds: "This quotation needs no comment from us; it speaks for itself. All we ask is to compare it with Dr. N's labored effort about the oft-repeated "*inward weakness*" of revival preachers in the present day." Now if there be anything plain in the whole tract, it is that the inward weakness attributed by it, not to *revival* preachers, but to such as glory in the system of the Bench, is that of the "*flesh*" mainly as opposed to the strength which is from God's Spirit. When I am weak, says Paul, then am I strong. Quackery affects to be strong, but is weak in fact. Its weakness does not stand in the measure of its own resources so much, as in its separation from the ground of all strength in God.

the world. Quack lawyers, quack statesmen, quack scholars, quack teachers, quack *gentlemen*, quacks in a word of every name and shape, meet us plentifully in every direction. We need not be surprised then to find the evil fully at home also in the sphere of religion. Indeed it might seem to be more at home here, than any where else. Here especially the heart of man, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," has shown itself most ingenious in all ages, in substituting the shadow for the reality, the form for the substance, the outward for the inward. The religion of the world has always been, for the most part, arrant quackery. Paganism can exist under no other form. The mummers of Rome, as aping powers of a higher order, is the most stupendous system of quackery the world has ever witnessed. But quackery in the Church, is not confined of course to Rome. Christianity, in its very nature, must ever act on the corrupt nature of man as a powerful stimulus to the evil. No system embraces such powers, inward, deep and everlasting. These, man would fain appropriate and make his own, in an external way, without relinquishing himself, and entering soul and body that sphere of the Spirit, in which alone they can be understood and felt. So Simon Magus dreamed of purchasing the gift of God, and clothing himself with it in the way of outward possession. *He* was a quack; the prototype and prince of evangelical quacks. The second Century shows us the whole Christian world

brilliantly illuminated with rival systems of quackery, under the name of Gnosticism, which for a time seemed to darken the sun of truth itself by their false but powerful glare. Afterwards, under a less idealistic garb, the evil fairly enthroned itself in the Church. The Reformation was the resurrection of the Truth once more, in its genuine and original life. Luther was no quack. But Protestantism itself soon had its quacks again, in plentiful profusion, and has them all the world over at the present day. Christianity, as of old, serves to call the false spirit continually into action. Some whole sects stand only in the element of quackery. And among all sects, it is easy to find the same element to some extent actively at work; sometimes under one form, and sometimes under another; but always exalting the outward at the cost of the inward, and promising in the power of the flesh what can never be accomplished except in the power of the spirit.

Wherever *forms* in religion are taken to be—we will not say the spiritual realities themselves with which the soul is concerned, for the error in that shape would be too gross—but the power and force at least by which these realities are to be apprehended, without regard to their own invisible virtue, there we have quackery in the full sense of the term. Religion must have forms, as well as an inward living force. But these can have no value, no proper reality, except as they spring perpetually from the presence of that living force itself. The inward must be the

bearer of the outward. Quackery however reverses the case. The outward is made to bear the inward. The shrine, consecrated with the proper ceremonies, *must* become a shechinah. Forms have a virtue in them, to bind and rule the force of things. Such forms may be exhibited in a ritual, or in a creed, or in a scheme of a religious experience mechanically apprehended ; but in the end, the case is substantially the same. It is quackery in the garb of religion, without its inward life and power.

That *old* forms are liable to be thus abused, and have been extensively thus abused in fact, is easily admitted. But it is not always recollected, that *new* forms furnish precisely the same opportunity for the same error. It is marvellous indeed how far this seems to be overlooked, by the zealous advocates of the system of New Measures, in our own day. They propose to rouse the Church from its dead formalism. And to do this effectually, they strike off from the old ways of worship, and bring in new and strange practices, that are adapted to excite attention. These naturally produce a theatrical effect, and this is taken at once for an evidence of waking life in the congregation. One measure, losing its power in proportion as it becomes familiar, leads to the introduction of another. A few years since a sermon was preached and published by a somewhat distinguished revivalist, in which the ground was openly taken that there must be a constant succession of new measures in the Church, to keep it alive and awake ; since

only in this way could we hope to counteract permanently the force of that spiritual gravitation, by which the minds of men are so prone continually to sink towards the earth in the sphere of religion. The philosophy this precisely, by which the Church of Rome, from the fourth Century downward, was actuated in all her innovations. Her worship was designed to make up through the flesh, what was wanting in the spirit. The friends of new measures affect to be more free than others, from the authority of mere forms. They wish not to be fettered and cramped by ordinary methods. And yet none make more account in fact of forms. They discard old forms, only to trust the more blindly in such as are new. Their *methods* are held to be all sufficient, for awakening sinners and effecting their conversion ! They have no faith in ordinary pastoral ministrations, comparatively speaking ; no faith in the Catechism. Converts made in this way are regarded with suspicion. But they have great faith in the Anxious Bench and its accompaniments. Old measures they hold to be in their very nature unfriendly to the spirit of revivals ; they are the “letter that killeth.” But new measures “make alive.” And yet they are *measures*, when all is done ; and it is only by losing sight of the inward power of truth, that any can be led to attach to them any such importance.

To rely upon the Anxious Bench, to be under the necessity of having recourse to new measures of any sort to enlist attention or pro-

duce effect, in the work of the gospel, shows a want of inward spiritual force. If it be true that old forms are dead and powerless in a minister's hands, the fault is not in the forms, but in the minister himself; and it is the very impotence of quackery, to think of mending the case essentially by the introduction of new forms. The man who had no power to make himself felt in the catechetical class, is deceived most assuredly and deceives others, when he seems to be strong in the use of the anxious bench. Let the power of religion be present in the soul of him who is called to serve at the altar, and no strange fire will be needed to kindle the sacrifice. He will require no new measures. His strength will appear rather in resuscitating, and clothing with their ancient force, the institutions and services already established for his use. The freshness of a divine life, always young and always new, will stand forth to view in forms that before seemed sapless and dead. Attention will be engaged; interest excited; souls drawn to the sanctuary. Sinners will be awakened, and born into the family of God. Christians will be builded up in faith, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Religion will grow and prosper. This is the true idea of evangelical power. But let a preacher be inwardly weak, though ambitious at the same time of making an impression in the name of religion, and he will find it necessary to go to work in a different way. Old forms must needs be dull and spiritless, in his hands. His sermons

have neither edge nor point. The services of the sanctuary are lean and barren. He can throw no interest into the catechism. He has no heart for family visitation, and no skill to make it of any account. Still he desires to be doing something in his spiritual vocation, to convince others, and to satisfy himself, that he is not without strength. What then is to be done? He must resort to quackery ; not with clear consciousness, of course ; but instinctively, as it were, by the pressure of inward want. He will seek to do by the flesh, what he finds himself too weak to effect by the spirit. Thus it becomes possible for him to make himself felt. New measures fall in exactly with his taste, and are turned to fruitful account by his zeal. He becomes theatrical ; has recourse to solemn tricks ; cries aloud ; takes strange attitudes ; tells exciting stories ; calls out the anxious ; &c. In this way possibly he comes to be known as a revivalist, and is counted among those who preach the gospel “with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power.” And yet when all is done, he remains as before without true spiritual strength. New measures are the refuge of weakness.

There may be cases indeed, in which genuine power will express itself in new forms. But when this occurs, it will always be without ostentation or effort. Miracles are ever natural, as distinguished from mere wonder-works and feats of legerdemain. The form is the simple product of the power it represents, growing forth

from it, and filled with it at every point. Where this is the case, what is new is at the same time free, and entitled to our respect. But such instances can never authorize imitation, where the same inward power is not present. Such imitation is quackery and an argument of weakness. Paul had power to wield the name of Jesus with effect for the expulsion of demons ; but when the sons of Sceva, the Jew, undertook to exorcise in the same way, the demoniac fell upon them, and drove them naked and wounded from the house. They were quacks. Ezekiel prophesied in the valley of dry bones, and there was a noise and great shaking ; but when a preacher, with nothing of Ezekiel's strength, lays himself out to excite noise and bodily action, as though *this* must certainly include the breath of life, the whole business sinks into a solemn farce. The Spirit of God, on the day of Pentecost, came like a mighty rushing wind on the disciples in Jerusalem, causing them to speak with tongues ; but when a religious meeting is turned into a babel, to make it pentecostal, it deserves to be reprobated as savoring more of hell than heaven. Life is always beautiful in its place ; but hideous and ghastly are the muscular actings of a galvanised corpse. An apostrophe from the lips of Whitfield might thrill, like an electric shock, through a whole congregation, and yet be no better than a vulgar mountebank trick, as imitated by an ordinary revivalist, affecting to walk in his steps. An Edwards might so preach the truth as to force his hearers from their seats,

and yet be no pattern whatever for those, who with design and calculation call in the device of "decision acts," as they are termed, to create a similar show of power. Whitfield and Edwards needed no new measures, to make themselves felt.* They were genuine men of God, who had strength from heaven in themselves. They were no quacks.

The system of New Measures then is to be deprecated, as furnishing a refuge for weakness and sloth in the work of the ministry, and in this way holding out a temptation, which, so far as it prevails, leads ministers to undervalue and neglect the cultivation of that true inward strength, without which no measures can be at last of much account. This is a great evil.

* Whitefield and Edwards ! exclaim the champions of the Bench ; they were both thorough going New Measure men, and it is a slander upon their names, to speak of them as belonging to the opposite interest. Now it is not said here, that they tolerated no new things in the worship of God ; but only that they *needed* nothing of this sort, to make themselves felt. What was new, in their case, was not sought ; it came of itself, the free natural result of the power it represented. Whitefield had recourse to new methods himself, to some extent, and Edwards carried his toleration of such things far, in favor of others ; but in neither instance could it be said, that any value was attached to what was thus out of the common way, for its own sake, or as something to be aimed at with care and design beforehand. The judgment of Edwards in this case moreover, it should be remembered, as given in his *Thoughts on the revival in New England*, had respect to the particular things it sanctions, not in a general way, but as related to an extraordinary work of God, of great extent and long continuance, most amply authenticated on *other* grounds. It is a widely different case, when we are required to accept such things, on their *own* credit, as the evidence of a revival, or as the power by which it is to be secured.

It is a vastly more easy thing to carry forward the work of religion in this way, than it is to be steadily and diligently true to the details of ministerial duty, as prescribed by the apostle Paul. To be “vigilant, sober and of good behavior”—“not self willed, not soon angry”—“just, holy, temperate”—“one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity”—holding fast the faithful word, in such sort “that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers;” to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness,” so as to be “an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;” to be “gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;” to meditate on divine things, and to be wholly given to them, so as to be continually profiting in the view of all; to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;” to be a scribe well instructed in the law, a workman that need not to be ashamed, able to bring forth from the treasury of God’s word things new and old, as they may be wanted; to preach week after week, so as to instruct and edify the souls of men; to be earnest, faithful, pungent, in the lecture room and catechetical class; to be known in the family visitation, in the sick chamber, in the dwelling places of poverty and sorrow, as the faithful pastor, “watching for souls,” whose very presence serves to remind men of holiness and heaven, not at certain seasons only, but

from month to month, from one year always to another ; all this is something great and difficult, and not to be compassed without a large amount of inward spiritual strength. But it calls for comparatively little power, for a man to distinguish himself as a leader in periodical religious excitements, where zeal has room for outward display, and wholesale action is employed to discharge within a month the claims of a year. It is not asserted that a minister *must* be destitute of the qualifications that are required to make a regularly faithful and efficient pastor, in order that he may be fitted to make himself conspicuous in this way ; but most assuredly such *may* be the case. A man may be mighty in the use of new measures, preaching every day if need be for three weeks to crowded congregations, excited all the time ; he may have the anxious bench filled at the close of each service, and the whole house thrown into disorder ; he may have groaning, shouting, clapping, screaming, a very bedlam of passion, all around the altar ; and as the result of all, he may be able to report a hundred converts or more, translated by the process, according to his own account, from darkness into God's marvellous light. He may be able to act the same part in similar scenes, at different places, in the course of a winter ; and, for the time being, his name may be familiar to the lips of men, as a *revivalist*, whose citizenship might be supposed to hold in the third heavens. All this *may* be, where to an attentive observer it shall soon be painfully evi-

dent, at the same time, that the true and proper strength of a man of God is wholly wanting. A man may so distinguish himself, and yet have no power to study, think or teach. He may be crude, chaotic, without cultivation or discipline. He may be too lazy to read or write. There may be no power whatever in his ordinary walk or conversation, to enforce the claims of religion. Meet him in common secular connections, and you find him in a great measure unfelt, in the stream of worldliness with which he is surrounded. Often he is covetous; often vain; often without a particle of humility or meekness. His zeal too seems to exhaust itself in each spasmodic "awakening," through which it is called to pass. The man who appeared to be all on fire for the salvation of souls, and ready to storm even the common proprieties of life for the sake of the gospel, shows himself now marvellously apathetic towards the whole interest. He has no heart to seize *common* opportunities, in the house or by the way, to say a word in favor of religion. It is well indeed if he be not found relaxing altogether his ministerial activity, both in the pulpit and from house to house. The truth is, he has no capacity, no inward sufficiency, for the ordinary processes of evangelical labor. Much is required to be a faithful minister of the New Testament; whilst small resources in comparison are needed for that semblance of power, to which a man may attain by the successful use of the system now in view.

Here then is a strong temptation presented to

ministers. They are in danger of being seduced, by the appeals which this system makes to their selfishness and sloth. It offers to their view, a "short method of doing God's great work, and a sort of "royal road," at the same time, to ministerial reputation. How easy, in these circumstances, for even a good man, to have his judgment warped and his practice disturbed. And how natural, that weakness, under every form, should rejoice to take refuge, in the shelter thus brought within its reach.

It should be considered a calamity in any community, or in any religious denomination, to have this system in fashionable and popular use. Let the idea prevail, that those who employ new measures in the gospel work, are the friends pre-eminently of serious heart religion, and of all evangelical interests; whilst such as frown upon them are to be regarded with suspicion, as at best but half awake in the service of Christ. Let it be counted enough to authenticate the power of a pastor's ministrations, that he shall be able to furnish, from winter to winter, a flaming *report* of some three weeks' awakening in his charge, in the course of which scores of sinners have been drawn to the anxious bench, and immediately afterwards hurried to the Lord's table. Let some religious paper, known as the organ of the Church, herald these *reports*, from week to week, without inquiry or discrimination, as "revival intelligence," proclaiming them worthy of all confidence, and glorifying both the measures and the men concerned in the tri-

umphs they record. Let those who are counted "pillars in the church" give their sanction to the same judgment, openly honoring the new system, or quietly conniving at what they may not entirely approve, so as by their very cautions and exceptions to forward the whole interest in fact. Let the sentiment be industriously cherished, that with this interest is identified in truth the cause of revivals itself, and that lukewarmness, and dead orthodoxy, and indifference, if not absolute hostility, towards prayer-meetings, missionary efforts, and all good things, characterise as a matter of course all who refuse to do it homage. Let this state of things hold with respect to the subject, and it needs no great discernment to see that it is likely to work disastrously upon the character and fortunes of the Church so circumstanced. The attention of ministers will be turned away from more important, but less ostentatious, methods of promoting religion. Preaching will become shallow. The catechism may be possibly still treated with professed respect, but practically it will be shorn of its honor and force. Education may be considered to some extent necessary for the work of the ministry, but in fact no great care will be felt to have it either thorough or complete. Ignorance, sciolism, and quackery, will lift up the head on all sides, and show themselves off as the "great power of God." Novices will abound, "puffed up with pride," each wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. Young men, candidates for the sacred office,

will be encouraged to try their hand at the new system, before they have well commenced their studies, and finding that they have power to make themselves felt in this way, will yield their unfledged judgment captive to its charms, so as to make no account afterwards of any higher form of strength. Study, and the retired cultivation of personal holiness, will seem to their zeal an irksome restraint; and making their lazy, heartless course of preparation as short as possible, they will go out with the reputation of educated ministers, blind leaders of the blind, to bring the ministry into contempt, and fall themselves into the condemnation of the devil. Whatever arrangements may exist in favor of a sound and solid system of religion, their operation will be to a great extent frustrated and defeated, by the predominant influence of a sentiment, practically adverse to the very object they are designed to reach.

Thus will the ministry be put, more or less, out of joint, by the force of the wrong judgment involved in the system of New Measures, where it has come to be fashionable and popular. The Church must suffer corresponding harm, of course, in all her interests. The old landmarks grow dim. Latitudinarian views gain ground. Fanatical tendencies gather strength. The ecclesiastical body is swelled with heterogenous elements, loosely brought together, and actuated by no common life, except sectarian bigotry may be entitled to such name. False views of religion abound. Conversion is everything,

sanctification nothing. Religion is not regarded as the life of God in the soul, that must be cultivated in order that it may grow, but rather as a transient excitement to be renewed from time to time by suitable stimulants presented to the imagination. A taste for noise and rant supersedes all desire for solid knowledge. The susceptibility of the people for religious instruction is lost on the one side, along with the capacity of the ministry to impart religious instruction on the other. The details of christian duty are but little understood or regarded. Apart from its seasons of excitement, no particular church is expected to have much power. Family piety, and the religious training of the young, are apt to be neglected.

It is a calamity then, in the general view of the case now taken, for a community to be drawn into the vortex of this system, as a reigning fashion. The occasional use of it might be comparatively safe ; in some hands, *perhaps*, without harm altogether. But let it be in credit and reputation, for a short time, on a given field, and its action will be found to be just as mischievous as has now been described. It will prove the refuge of weakness and the resort of quacks. It will be a “wide and effectual door” to let in fanaticism and error. It will be as a worm at the root of the ministry, silently consuming its strength ; and as a mildew on the face of congregations and churches, beneath whose blighting presence no fruit can be brought to perfection.

CHAPTER IV.

Action of the Bench.—It creates a false issue for the conscience.—Unsettles true seriousness.—Usurps the place of the Cross.—Results in widespread, lasting spiritual mischief.

Let us now fix our attention on the action of the new system, directly and immediately considered. Without regard to its more remote connections and consequences, let us inquire what its merits may be in fact, as it respects the interest it proposes to promote, namely, the conversion of souls. Is it the wisdom of God and the power of God, as its friends would fain have us believe, for convincing careless sinners, and bringing them to the foot of the Cross? Let the Anxious Bench, in this case, be taken as the representative of the entire system. No part of it carries a more plausible aspect. If it be found wanting and unworthy of confidence here, we may safely pronounce it to be unworthy of confidence at every other point.

As usually applied, in seasons of religious excitement, I hold the measure to be spiritually dangerous; requiring great skill and much caution, to be used without harm in any case, and

as managed by quacks and novices, (who are most ready to be taken with it,) more suited to ruin souls than to bring them to heaven. This view is established by the following positions.

1. *The Anxious Bench, in the case of an awakened sinner, creates a false issue for the conscience.* God has a controversy with the impenitent. He calls upon them to acknowledge their guilt and misery, with true repentance, and to submit themselves by faith to the righteousness of the gospel. It is their condemnation, that they refuse to do this. When any sinner begins to be sensible in any measure of his actual position in this view, he is so far awakened and under conviction. Now in these circumstances, what does his case mainly require? Clearly, that he should be made to see more and more the true nature of the controversy in which he is involved, till he finds himself inwardly engaged to lay down the weapons of his rebellion, and cast himself upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. He needs to have his eyes fastened and fixed on his own relations, spiritually considered, to the High and Holy One, with whom he is called to make his peace. The question is, will he repent and yield his heart to God, or not? This is the true issue to be met and settled; and it is all important that he should be so shut up to this in his thoughts, that he may have no power to escape the force of the challenge which it involves. That spiritual treatment must be considered best in his case, which serves most fully to bring this issue into view, and holds him

most effectually confronted with it in his conscience, beneath the clear light of the Bible. But let the sinner in this state be called to come forward to a particular seat, in token of his anxiety. He finds himself at once under the force of a different challenge. The question is not, will he repent and yield his heart to God, but will he go to the anxious bench; which is something different altogether. Thus a new issue is raised, by which the other is obscured or thrust out of sight. It is a false issue too; because it seems to present the real point in controversy, when in fact it does not do so at all, but only distracts and bewilders the judgment so far as this is concerned. While the awakened person is balancing the question of going to the anxious bench, his mind is turned away from the contemplation of the immediate matter of quarrel between himself and God. The higher question is merged, for the time, in one that is lower. A new case is created for the conscience, of artificial, arbitrary form, and ambiguous authority. Can it be wise thus to shift the ground of debate, exchanging a strong position with regard to the sinner for one that is weak? Suppose it were made a point with awakened persons, that they should rise up and confess before the congregation all their leading sins, in detail and by name, to break their pride, show their desire to be saved, excite prayer in their behalf, &c.; would not this requirement, interposed as a preliminary to the main point of conversion itself, and enforced by no proper sanc-

tion for the conscience, serve only to turn away the attention of such persons from the object with which it should be employed, thwarting the very interest it might affect to promote? And is there not room for objection to the Anxious Bench, on the very same ground? It is certainly a little strange, that the class of persons precisely who claim to be the most strenuous, in insisting upon unconditional, immediate submission to God, scarcely tolerating that a sinner should be urged to pray or read the bible, lest his attention should be diverted from that one point, are as a general thing nevertheless quite ready to interpose *this* measure in his way to the foot of the cross, as though it included in fact the very thing itself. And yet a pilgrimage to the Anxious Bench, is in its own nature as much collateral to the duty of coming to Christ, as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In either case a false issue is presented to the anxious soul, by which for the time a true sight of its circumstances is hindered rather than promoted.

It may be thought indeed, that the movement of going to the Anxious Bench is so easily performed, as not to be properly open to this exception. It may be considered a mere *circumstance*, that can have no weight practically in the view now presented. But we shall see that this is not the case. However small the point involved may seem, it is not only of account, as producing for the moment a factitious case of conscience, open to "doubtful disputation," but it includes also actual difficulty that cannot fail

to be felt. Whether the challenge be refused or accepted, it becomes in most cases more than a circumstance, and is of no small force in fact in the way of embarrassing the proper exercises of an awakened soul.

2. *The Anxious Bench, in the case of those who come to it, is adapted by its circumstances to disturb and distract the thoughts of the truly serious, and thus to obstruct the action of truth in their minds.* It is no doubt quite a common thing for persons to be carried into this movement, who have little or no seriousness at the time, urged forward by sympathy, or superstition, or a mere taste for distinction. There is much reason in the remark of the Rev. Dr. Miller, when he tells us that he should expect, in calling out the anxious, to find the persons rising and presenting themselves, to be, for the most part, "the forward, the sanguine, the rash, the self-confident and the self-righteous," while many who kept their seats would prove to be the modest, the humble, the brokenhearted, the very depth of whose seriousness had restrained them from coming forward in this way.* And yet the measure may be expected to prevail of course with many persons also, who are truly under conviction, and whom nothing but the fear of losing their souls could engage to thrust themselves thus into view. In any case however, the genuine religious feeling that may exist, is likely to be in a great measure overwhelm-

* Appendix to Sprague on Revivals, p. 38.

ed by the excitement that must be involved in the very act of coming to such a resolution, and subsequently in carrying it into effect. The truth of this remark will be more clear, when we remember that young persons, and females especially, form the main body commonly of those who are drawn to the anxious bench. Their susceptibility fits them to be wrought upon more readily than others, to the extent that is necessary to secure this point. But the same susceptibility renders it certain, that in circumstances so exciting it will be impossible for them, to hold their thoughts or feelings in any such balance, as the interest of religion requires. They of all others would *need* to be sheltered from stimulating impressions in this form, at such a time, instead of being forced to face them in their weakness.

Take a single case, in illustration of the way in which the system may be expected to work. Here is a gentle girl, sixteen or seventeen years of age. She finds herself in the midst of a large congregation, where at the close of the sermon, the minister, encouraged by the general seriousness of the house, invites all who are concerned for the salvation of their souls, to come forward and place themselves on the anxious seat. She has been perhaps a long time under some concern, or it may be that God's truth has been felt for the first time on this occasion; not with *great* force perhaps, but so at least as to bring her spirit to a solemn stand in the presence of her Maker. She hears the invitation, but shrinks

from the thought of doing what the minister demands. The call however is reiterated, and enforced by the most exciting appeals to the imagination. After a few moments there is a stir; one is going forward to the bench, and then another, and another. She is struck, moved, agitated. A struggle has commenced in her bosom, which she herself is not prepared to understand. May she not be fighting against God, she asks herself, in refusing to go forward with the rest? May it not be in her case, at this moment, now or never? All this is solemnly crowded on her alarmed conscience by the whole character of the occasion, in the way in which it is managed by the minister. Already her soul has passed from the element of conviction into the element of excitement. The "still small voice" of the Spirit is drowned amid the tumult of her own conflicting thoughts. But see, she yields. With a desperate struggle, she has thrown herself forth into the aisle. Trembling and agitated in every nerve, poor victim of quackery, she makes her way, consciously in the eye of that large watching assembly, from one end of the house to the other, and sinks, half fainting with the effort, into a corner of the magic seat. And now, where is she, in spiritual position? Are her tears the measure of her sorrow for sin? Alas, she is farther off from God, than she was before this struggle commenced in her father's pew. Calm reflection is departed. Her hold upon the inward has been lost. Could any intelligent Christian parent,

truly anxious for the salvation of his daughter, deliberately advise her in the circumstances which have been supposed, to seek religion in this way? Can the pastor be wise, who is willing to subject the lambs of his flock to such a process, with the view of bringing the good seed of the word, to take root, and vegetate in their hearts?

3. *The Anxious Bench is adapted to create and foster the ruinous imagination, that there is involved in the act of coming to it a real decision in favor of religion.* It is well known, how in the Church of Rome certain observances are held, to carry with them a sort of inward merit in this way, as though by themselves they had power to secure a spiritual blessing. There is a constant tendency with men indeed, to invest the outward under *some* form, with the virtue that belongs only to the inward, so as if possible to "get religion," and hold it as property or means for some other end, instead of entering into it as the proper home of their own being. It is not strange then that the Anxious Bench should be liable to be so abused. It is only strange that sensible persons should make so little account of this danger, as is sometimes done. We are gravely told, it is true, that coming to the anxious bench is not considered to be the same thing as coming to Christ.* The measure

* "Who ever pretended that going to the anxious bench is conversion?" *Luth. Observer*, Dec. 15, 1843. And yet, in the same article, it is said again, of one who yields to the measure: "Does he not resolve no longer to resist the influ-

is represented to be important, on other grounds, and for other purposes. Certainly, it is not imagined for a moment, that any one in his senses will be found ready to *say* that coming to the bench is itself religion. But still that some such impression is liable to be created by the measure, and is extensively created by it in fact as it is commonly used, admits of no dispute. It is not uncommon indeed for those who make use of it, to throw in occasionally something like a word of caution with regard to this point; and in some few instances, possibly, such prudence may be observed, as fully to guard against the danger. But this is not common. As a general thing, even the cautions that are interposed are in such a form, as to be almost immediately neutralized and absorbed, by representations of an opposite character. The whole matter is so

ences of divine grace, and wage war against God, and the efforts of his faithful minister?" Such submission is commonly taken to be conversion.—In another place, the editor finds the principle of the Bench in John vii. 37, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*, and in Matt. xi. 28, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden*, &c. The parallel is monstrous, and has a rank smell of pelagianism. In like strain, Mr. Davis of Pittsburg, calls the bench a "test," and compares it with the "device of the forbidden fruit" in the garden of Eden, and the "anxious river" in which Naaman, the Syrian was required to wash, 2 Kings v. 10--12, that he might be cured of his leprosy. "If no *test-questions* are presented, how can men ever *act*, or *determine* whether they will serve God or not?" "Viewed as a means of bringing sinners to an *immediate decision* on the subject of religion, no reasonable objection can be brought against it." *Plea for New Measures*, p. 23—30. Right bravely spoken again; but, I repeat it, the very dialect of QUACKDOM!

managed, as practically to encourage the idea that a veritable step towards Christ at least, if not actually into his arms, is accomplished in the act of coming to the anxious seat. I have had an opportunity of witnessing the use of the measure, in different hands and on different occasions ; but in every case, it has seemed to me that room was given for this censure.* Indeed I do not see well, how the measure could be employed in any case with much effect, without the help of some such representation. We find accordingly that the whole process, as it were in spite of itself, runs ordinarily into this form. Sinners are exhorted to come to the anxious bench, as for their life, by the same considerations precisely that should have force to bring them to Christ, and that could have no force at all in this case, if it were not confounded more or less to their perception with the other idea. The burden of all is presented in the beautiful, but much prostituted hymn, usually sung on such occasions, *Come, humble sinner.* The whole of this is

* "He exhorted them to repent of their sins, and go to their forsaken God. To aid them in their return, an anxious seat was prepared on Sabbath evening ; &c." *Corresp. Luth. Obs* Dec. 16, 1842 "The anxious seat was introduced through some opposition--and at it the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and young, the male and female bowed. They were not ashamed of that despised seat, but presented themselves there with as much avidity as if they were certain of getting a fortune there. And so they did. There they received a title to mansions in the skies, &c." Jan. 6, 1843. "On Sunday night the anxious were invited to occupy the front seats, for the usual purposes, and O what a crowding was there to the foot of the cross!" June 8, 1843.

made to bear, with all the weight the preacher can put into it, on the question of coming to the anxious seat. Every effort is employed to shut up the conscience of the sinner to this issue ; to make him feel that he *must* come or run the hazard of losing his soul. Advantage is taken of his hopes and fears, in every form of awakening and stimulating appeal, to draw him from his seat. The call is so represented, as to make this the test of penitence. Those who come are welcomed as returning prodigals, who have decided to come out from the world and be on the Lord's side ; while all who refuse to come are treated as showing just the opposite temper ; and it often happens that the preacher, in the warmth of his zeal, charges upon their refusal in this view the same guilt and madness and peril precisely, that lie upon the deliberate rejection of Christ himself. Now it is an easy thing to say, in these circumstances, that after all the Anxious Bench is not substituted for Christ. So the puseyite and papist disclaim the idea of putting into his place the Baptismal Font. But in both cases it is perfectly plain, that Christ is seriously wronged notwithstanding. In both cases the error is practically countenanced and encouraged, that coming to Christ, and the use of an outward form, are in whole, or at least to some considerable extent, one and the same thing ; with the difference only, that the form in one case is of divine prescription, while in the other it is wholly of man's device.

It is true indeed that the "mourners," as they

are sometimes termed, are still treated, after coming to the bench or altar, as persons yet unconverted. This should neutralize, it might seem, the idea of any such saving virtue in the measure, as is here supposed to be encouraged, in the usual style of calling out the anxious. But this is not the case. The coming is not accepted at once as conversion, though exhibited apparently as the same thing immediately before ; but still it is taken practically for something closely bordering on conversion. The mourners are counted nearer to the kingdom of heaven, than they were before. They are exhorted now to "go on," as having actually begun a divine life. The process of conversion is commenced. They have come to the birth ; and all that is wanted to bring them fully into the new world of grace, is the vigorous prosecution of the system of deliverance, to which they have now happily committed their souls. The Anxious Bench is made still to be the laver of regeneration, the gate of paradise, the womb of the New Jerusalem. Conversion is represented to be far easier here, than elsewhere. We find accordingly that this idea fairly carried out, leads certain sects of the full New Measure stamp, to profess a peculiar tact and power in carrying the process of spiritual delivery regularly out at once to its proper issue. It is only for want of proper treatment they say, and because "there is not strength to bring forth," in other cases, that souls are brought thus far, without being born at once into the kingdom. *Their Anxious*

Bench, or the altar where their mourners kneel and roll, is commended to the world, as a more perfect organ of conversion. Once fairly within its grasp, the soul as a general thing is quickly set free; often in the course of a few minutes, and very commonly before the close of the meeting. They know how to "get the anxious through." All this is sufficiently extravagant; but still it is only a gross expression of the feeling, commonly encouraged by the use of the Anxious Bench, with regard to its virtue as a help to conversion. The whole measure is so ordered, as to promote the delusion that the use of it serves *some* purpose in the regeneration of the soul.

4. *Harm and loss to the souls of men flow largely from the use of the Anxious Bench.* It is an injury, in the case of an awakened sinner, to have his attention diverted, in the first place, from the real issue before him to one that is false. It is an injury farther, to have reflection arrested, and the workings of true conviction in part or altogether overwhelmed, by the excitement of obeying a call to come out in this way. It is an injury again, to be induced to lean upon such a movement; as though it could have any efficacy at all to bring the soul near to God. But the harm and loss occasioned by the system, reach much farther than this.

The inward tumult resulting from the occasion, is in a high degree unfavorable to genuine seriousness, while it lasts, and is sure to be followed by a reaction, still more hurtful to the spirit,

when the occasion is over. "All means and measures," says the Rev. Dr. Alexander, in his letter to Dr. Sprague, "which produce a high degree of excitement, or a great commotion of the passions, should be avoided; because religion does not consist in these violent emotions, nor is it promoted by them; and when they subside, a wretched state of deadness is sure to succeed."

A most unhappy influence is often exerted on those, who are drawn to the anxious bench, and afterwards fall back again openly to their former careless state. They may have had but very little conviction, perhaps none at all. But their feelings have been excited, and without knowledge or reflection, they have gone forward among the professed mourners, vaguely expecting to gain religion in this way. Afterwards they find themselves completely stripped of all feeling. They have too much understanding to set any value on their experience, and too much conscience to be willing that it should pass for more than they know it to be worth in fact; or possibly they have swung clear over to the opposite quarter, and have no wish at all to be, or to be considered religious. And yet they have been on the anxious bench, and in great distress apparently for their sins. They have publicly committed themselves, in the case, in a way that is not likely soon to be forgotten. All this works injuriously on their minds now. Rash vows are always hurtful. The posture with regard to religion is altogether worse than

it was before. Often disgust and irritation towards the whole subject, are the unfortunate consequence.

But in a vast multitude of instances, the operation of the measure is worse still. The slightly convicted are full as likely to go forward in the way of profession, as they are to go back. Powerful considerations are at hand, besides the interest of their own salvation, to hold them to the course on which they have entered. They are committed, and have no prospect of coming honorably or comfortably out of their present posture, except by *getting through*, on the side towards the Church and not towards the world. There is room too for the workings of ambition and emulation; a desire to be noticed, and an impatience of being left behind by others, in the career of spiritual experience. "It ought not to be forgotten," says Dr. Alexander, "that the heart is deceitful above all things, and that strong excitement does not prevent the risings of pride and vain glory. Many become hypocrites, when they find themselves the objects of much attention, and affect feelings which are not real."* And if all such impure motives might be supposed to be out of the way, there is still enough to render the danger of spurious conversion, in such circumstances, alarmingly great. The mourner strives of course to *feel* faith. The spiritual helpers standing round are actively concerned, to see him brought triumphantly through. Excitement

* Sprague on Revivals. Appendix, p. 7.

rules the hour. No room is found either for instruction or reflection. A sea of feeling, blind, dark and tempestuous, rolls on all sides. Is it strange, that souls thus conditioned and surrounded, should become the victims of spiritual delusion? All high wrought excitement must, in its very nature, break, when it reaches a certain point. How natural that this relaxation, carrying with it the sense of relief as compared with the tension that had place before, should be mistaken on such an occasion for the peace of religion, that mysterious something which it is the object of all this process to fetch into the mind. And how natural that the wearied subject of such experience, should be hurried into a wild fit of joy by this imagination, and stand prepared, if need be, to clap his hands and shout hallelujah, over his fancied deliverance. Or even without this mimic sensation, how natural that the mourner, at a certain point, should allow himself to be persuaded by his own wishes, or by the authority of the minister perhaps, and other friends, telling him how easy it is to believe and urging him at last to consider the thing done; so as to take to himself the comfort of the new birth, as it were in spite of his own experience, and be counted among the converted. Altogether the danger of delusion and mistake, where this style of advancing the cause of religion prevails, must be acknowledged to be very great. The measure of the danger will vary of course, with the extent to which the characteristic spirit of the system is allowed to work. A

Winebrennerian camp meeting, surrendering itself to the full sway of this spirit, will carry with it a more disastrous operation, than the simple Anxious Bench in a respectable and orderly Church. But in any form, the system is full of peril, as opening the way to spurious conversions, and encouraging sinners to rest in hopes that are vain and false.

There need be no reserve, in speaking or writing on this subject. Neither charity nor delicacy require us to be silent, where the truth of religion is itself so seriously concerned. To countenance the supposition, that the souls which are so plentifully "carried through" what is called the process of conversion under this system, are generally converted in fact, would be to wrong the Gospel. "Let God be true, though every man should be a liar." Of all the hundreds that are reported, from year to year, as brought into the kingdom, among the Methodists, United Brethren, Winebrennerians, and others who work in the same style, under the pressure of artificial excitement, how small a proportion give evidence subsequently that they have been truly regenerated. The Church at large does not feel bound at all to accept as genuine and worthy of confidence, the many cases of conversion they are able to number, as wrought with noise and tumult at camp meetings and on other occasions. It is taken for granted that a large part of them will not stand. And so it turns out, in fact. In many cases, the fruits of a great revival are reduced almost

to nothing, before the end of a single year. So the system unfolds its own nakedness, in a practical way. And this nakedness comes to view, in some measure, wherever much account is made of the Anxious Bench. There may be no methodistical extravagance, no falling down or rolling in the dust, no shouting, jumping or clapping ; only the excitement and disorder necessarily belonging to the measure itself ; still it is found that conversions made in this way do not as a general thing wear well. No one, whose judgment has been taught by proper observation, will allow himself to confide in the results of a revival, however loudly trumpeted, in which the Anxious Bench is known to have played a prominent part. He may trust charitably that out of the fifty or a hundred converts thus hurried into the Church, some will be found "holding fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end ;" but he will stand prepared to hear of a great falling away, in the case of the accession as a whole, in the course of no considerable time. Of some such revivals scarce a monument is to be found, at the end of a few months, unless it be in the spiritual atrophy they have left behind. And it often happens that churches instead of growing and gathering strength by these triumphs of grace as they are called, seem actually to loose ground in proportion to their frequency and power. If any weight is to be attached to observations, which are on all sides within the reach of those who choose to inquire, it must be evident that as this

system is in all respects *suited* to produce spurious conversions, so it is continually producing them in fact, to a terrible extent. For the evil is not to be measured of course simply by the actual amount of open defection, that may take place among those who are thus brought to "embrace religion." So many and so strong are the considerations that must operate upon a supposed convert, to hold fast at least the form of godliness, after it has been once assumed, though wholly ignorant of its power, that we may well be surprised to find the actual falling away, in the case of such ingatherings, so very considerable as now represented. As it is, it becomes certain, in the very nature of the case, that this apostacy forms only a *part* of the false profession from which it springs. While some fall back openly to the world, others remain in the Church, with a name to live while they are dead. This presumption is abundantly confirmed by observation. Very many thus introduced into the Church show too plainly, by their unhallowed tempers, and the general worldliness of their walk and conversation, that they have never known what religion means. They have had their "experience," centering in the Anxious Bench, on which they continue to build their profession and its hopes; but farther than this they give no signs of life. They have no part nor lot in the Christian salvation.

Notoriously, no conversions are more precarious and insecure than those of the Anxious Bench. They take place under such circum-

stances precisely, as should make them the object of earnest jealousy and distrust. The most ample evidence of their vanity, is presented on every side. And yet the patrons of the system are generally ready to endorse them, as though they carried the broad seal of heaven on their face. Of conversions in any other form, they can be sufficiently jealous. They think it well for the Church to use great caution, in the case of those who have been led quietly, under the ordinary means of grace to indulge the Christian hope. They shrink perhaps from the use of the Catechism altogether, lest they might seem to aim at a religion of merely human manufacture. But let the power of the Anxious Bench appear, and strange to tell, their caution is at once given to the winds. *This* they proclaim to be the finger of God. Here the work of religion is presumed at once to authenticate itself. With very little instruction, and almost no examination, all who can persuade themselves that they are converted, are at once hailed as brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, and with as little delay as possible gathered into the full communion of the Church. And this is held to be building on the true foundation gold, silver and precious stones, while such as try to make christians in a different way are regarded as working mainly, almost as a matter of course, with wood, hay and stubble. Wonderful infatuation ! Stupendous inconsistency.

CHAPTER V.

The Bench vindicated on insufficient grounds :—1. As bringing the sinner to a DECISION ;—2. As involving him in a COMMITTAL ;—3. As giving FORCE TO HIS PURPOSE ;—4. As a penitential DISCIPLINE ;—5. As necessary for the purposes of INSTRUCTION ;—6. As opening the way for PRAYER.

In view of such disastrous action as we have now been called to contemplate, we ask on what grounds the use of the Anxious Bench is vindicated. These should be of great force, to counterbalance the weight of mischief with which it is attended. No divine appointment is pleaded in its favor.* We could not suppose for a mo-

* A good deal has been said indeed of the *principle* of the measure, as presented, according to its friends, in both the Old and New Testaments. But Mr. Denig has just been as successful in vindicating woman-preaching, shouting, rolling, &c., in this way, as the editor of the Lutheran Observer has been in justifying the anxious bench. All fanatical sects are able to muster something from the bible, which seems to cover, in sound at least, the principle of their peculiarities. So every abuse in the Church of Rome came in, under the shadow of pretended scriptural precedent. Her fasts, her vigils, her relics, her penances, &c., all found a show of support in the word of God. The angelic institute of *monkery* was abundantly commended, by the same authority. Was not

ment indeed, that any appointment of God could be associated with such bad influences and tendencies, as are found to hold in connection with this invention. But it is not pretended to make it of scriptural authority. It is vindicated on other grounds; with variable argument to suit the occasion. These however, are by no means satisfactory.

1. It serves, we are told, to bring awakened sinners to a *decision*. They are disposed to avoid this. They halt between two opinions. They should not be allowed to leave the sanctuary in this state. The Gospel calls for a present determination. It is well therefore to shut them up to that point. This is done by the Anxious Bench.*

This sounds well. But what is it that the sinner decides, when he rises and goes forward to

John the Baptist a monk; and Elijah the Tishbite; and Eli-sha the Son of Shaphat; and the sons of the prophets by Jordan; and the Rechabites; were they not examples in point, so far at least as the *principle* of the system was concerned? So argued the fathers of the fourth century; and it must be confessed, with full as much reason on their side, as the friends of New Measures have, when they appeal to the bible, in like strain, for the support of their favorite system.

* "It presents the conscience with the *true* issue, and invites the sinner, without delay, to manifest his choice of God, by coming forward. The 'anxious bench' does not suffer the sinner to go away simply meditating upon what he has heard; to go away in a state of rebellion, &c. But it calls upon him at once to submit to God." "Coming to the 'anxious bench' is a *token* of submission, and is used as a means wholly to that end."—*Davis' Plea*, p. 56.

the anxious seat ? He is encouraged to come, singing,

“I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose ;
I know his courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.”

Is *this* the decision, which the movement really involves ? Then it is the same thing with conversion ; the resolution of the prodigal carried into effect, when out of a deep sense of his poverty and misery, *he arose and went to his father*. And so much as this the considerations by which he is urged to come forward, would seem to imply. But when the point is pressed, we learn that no such extravagant supposition is entertained. Coming to the anxious bench is *not* coming to Christ. The sinner seated upon it, is unconverted still ; hangs still between Christ and the world ; and may still go away halting between two opinions, as fully as if he had not come out in this way at all. What shall we say of such a *decision* ? A decision that decides nothing ? The apostles, we are told, insisted on men's coming to the point at once in the business of religion, and we should do the same thing. So certainly we should. But is this such a point, as the apostles were accustomed to press ? When Peter found the multitude awakened on the day of Pentecost, he called them to an immediate decision. But what was the form, in which this was to be done ? “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," cried the preacher. "Come," roars the modern revival-monger, pleasing himself with the thought of being like Peter, on the day of Pentecost, "Come, humble sinner, in whose heart a thousand thoughts revolve, come, come without delay, this night, this moment, come—to the altar or to the anxious bench." Alas, for the parallel !* If it *be* conversion to come out in this way, let the thing be openly affirmed at once ; but if not, why mock us by calling it a decision, and pretending to find precedents for it in the Acts of the Apostles?

2. But the ground now is shifted ; sinners are not brought exactly to a decision by the Anxious Bench but they are brought at least to a *committal* ; and this is considered to be of great account. Let them go away from the house of God without this, and there will be a reason to fear that their seriousness may evaporate before the next meeting. We should take advantage of their feelings when they are excited, and engage them, if possible to take a step, by which they shall feel themselves committed to the world, as well as to their own consciences, in

* "We do not disparage baptism, by comparing it to the anxious bench. By no means ; we regard it as a sacrament, and intended for high purposes ; but it also involved the precise principle in that day, that the anxious bench does now. It afforded an opportunity for a public manifestation, on the part of those who submitted to it, of their determination to be Christians. So also does the anxious bench." *Luth. Obs.* Dec. 1. 1843. Alas, one may well be pardoned for whispering, "Why are you a LUTHERAN ?"

favor of religion. This is done, when we get them out to the anxious bench. They bind themselves by this act, to seek the Lord. The thing is known and talked about. They *feel* themselves bound, and their shame and pride come in to fortify the higher influences, by which they are urged to go forward and not "draw back unto perdition."

Low and jejune must be the conception of religion, which can allow such a view as this to be entertained. It is well indeed that sinners should bind themselves by an inward resolution, to seek the Lord, while he is to be found ; and it is right that they should be urged to do this, on all suitable occasions. But such a resolution, to be of any account, must proceed from intelligent reflection and inward self-possession ; and it can have no salutary force, except as entertained in the consciousness of God's presence and God's authority, to the exclusion comparatively of all inferior references. Nothing can be more irrational, than to think of making the sinner's feelings in this case a trap for his judgment, and then holding him fast by the force of an outward bond. The circumstances, in which he is urged to put his soul thus under pledge, are the very worst that could well be imagined for the purpose. Volney, in the storm at sea, was not more fully at the mercy of an element beyond himself. Death-bed resolutions, notoriously hollow as they are, embrace just as much rational freedom. The vows of a drunkard, in ordinary cases, are but little respected. But

here, where excitement, sympathy and passion combine, to wrap all spirits in a moral tornado, till the brain is found to reel with the bewildering, intoxicating element that surrounds it, the greatest account is made of such engagements, and every art is employed to secure them, even from hysterical girls if need be,* that they may feel themselves bound subsequently to "follow on to know the Lord." A large proportion of such resolutions must necessarily be without inward force; and now the sense of the *committal* is indeed required to sustain the solemn step which has been taken. But what is this, in such circumstances, but the substitution of low worldly references, as far as it prevails, for that consciousness of the soul's relations to God, in which alone, as we have already seen, any resolution of this sort can truly stand. So far exactly as the anxious person may be swayed by the thought of consistency, credit, or any similar interest, in continuing to seek religion, the true posture of conviction is wanting altogether. "How *can* ye believe," said Christ, "which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only." A reigning respect to the authority of the world, under any form disqualifies the soul for transacting honestly in the great interest of religion.

In a multitude of instances, these committals are followed by a reaction, in the minds of those

* "Have not hysterical girls souls to be saved?" *Luth. Obs.* Dec. 15, 1843. After due reflection, it seems necessary to answer this searching interrogation in the *affirmative*.

who are drawn into them, of the most unhappy kind. They fall back openly to the world, but not without a feeling of humiliation and spite, in the recollection of their own weakness ; and their state subsequently is worse than it was before. In the case of many others, the committal has its force no doubt, in carrying them forward, till they get fully into the Church ; and their profession possibly may have the same power, to hold them to the forms of religion afterwards, even to the end of life. But it is for the most part a false hope, to which they are thus conducted. The Church, in this way, is filled with hypocrites, and not with true converts.

3. But the ground may be slightly shifted again, so as to present the measure, not in the light exactly of a bond upon the sinner's soul, but as a *prop* and *support* rather to his weakness. A first step often costs more than a hundred that follow. A world of hesitation, in certain circumstances, is surmounted by a single effort to move. The sinner, when first awakened, shrinks from making his case known, and his concern, pent up in his own bosom, is not likely to be as strong and active, as it would be if it could appear in an outward form. Let him come then to the altar or the anxious bench. The man who signs a temperance pledge, finds his resolution to be sober supported by the act. Hundreds of drunkards have been enabled in this way to reform completely, who without this help, would have had no power to rise.

This is plausible; but it will not bear examination. A first step is of great account in religion; but only where it springs freely from the will; which it cannot do without reflection and self-command. An outward engagement to seek the Lord can be of no use, without a certain measure of intelligent conviction at work within; and where this is present, it will not be difficult to secure whatever may be proper or desirable in the other form, without having recourse to an expedient so full of danger. It is a part of the spiritual policy of the Romish Church to entice those who are serious, by means of vows, into positions from which they cannot draw back, with the view of thus establishing them in the purpose of a religious life. But we all know how little is gained in the Romish Church, by this policy. It is true indeed, that a drunkard may sign the temperance pledge, even when he is drunk, and afterwards keep it. But there is a vast difference between the object of the temperance pledge, and that which it is proposed to reach by means of the Anxious Bench. The one is fully within the compass of human will and human strength; the other is beyond it entirely.* The one may be mastered in the flesh;

* Mr. Finney holds the pledge in the one case, a fair exemplification of the advantage gained by bringing a sinner to the bench, in the other. The idea is quoted also with approbation, by the *Lutheran Observer*, Dec. 1. 1843 Mr. Davis finds gross heresy, antinomianism, fatalism, &c., in the statement of the tract, just at this point, *Plea*, p. 50—54. He speaks forth boldly the error, that lies wrapped up in the very heart and core of the system he represents. “Does the

the other cannot be approached or understood, except in the spirit. In any case however, vows and pledges that spring from excitement rather than reflection, are to be considered fanatical, and as such neither rational nor free; and though in certain cases, men may seem to be strengthened and supported by them, in the prosecution of good ends belonging to a lower sphere, they are ever to be deprecated in the sphere of religion, as tending only to delusion and sin.

4. The measure is sometimes recommended on the ground, that it is well suited to humble and break the sinner's pride. The carnal mind is not willing to stoop to the shame of the cross, in the view of a sinful world. It is difficult, at the same time, to bring it to a clear sight of this fact, in its own case. But the anxious bench reduces the question to a present point. If unwilling to stoop to the self-denial involved in coming to this, how can the awakened person be willing to do anything that religion requires. Thus the pride and wickedness of the heart, in relation to the gospel, are forced home upon the individual's consciousness; and when at length, under the pressure of this conviction, he goes forward and joins himself openly with the anxious, his pride is prostrated, and

sinner submit to God," it is asked with an air of triumph, "or does the Holy Ghost?" The only proper answer to such a question is, The Holy Ghost *in the sinner*, or the sinner as born of the Spirit in Christ, submits to God. Any view that stops short of this is rotten as pelagianism itself.

he is no longer ashamed to appear earnestly concerned for the salvation of his soul.

But it is easy to see, that on the same principle any *test* which might be imagined, for the same purpose, could be justified with equal ease. The sinner might be required to sit at the church door, clothed in sackcloth and ashes, begging an interest in the prayers of all the entering worshippers ; or to travel through all the aisles of the church itself, on his knees, in token of his humiliation. If unwilling to bend to such a requirement, how should he be counted truly in earnest, with respect to the main point ? In this way, the whole system of Romish penance might challenge our respect. In truth, however, no account is to be made of any such outward demonstration, as a test or token of the sinner's feelings, in the particular view now considered ! Popish penances involve commonly no spiritual mortification, and have no tendency whatever to reconcile men to the reproach of Christ. The sinner may be brought to lick the dust, if need be, under the pressure of an alarmed conscience, without a particle of that inward humiliation before God, which the idea of religion demands. So it is possible, and no doubt exceedingly common, for persons to take their seat on the anxious bench, with very little if any feeling at all, of this sort. Where the idea prevails that there is religion, to some extent, in the very act itself of coming out in this way, hundreds may easily be engaged to do so, just as under parallel circumstances they might be engaged to flagellate

themselves publicly through the streets, without the least benefit in the way of a conquest over their carnal pride. In some cases, the occupancy of the bench may indeed be attended with the wholesome discipline of humiliation, in the way supposed, preparing the spirit to follow Jesus “without the camp, bearing his reproach ;” but it is just as certain, that the same result has been secured, in *some* cases, by the penitential castigations of the Church of Rome, or the wilful self-inflections of fanaticism, in its worst forms. Where the soul is already prepared for spiritual humiliation, either the scourge or the bench, if duly accredited to the mourner’s conscience as the power of God for the purpose, may serve as an occasion to promote this end. This is no reason however, why we should have recourse to one or the other, in seeking to advance the interests of religion. There is no direct adaptation in either, to produce evangelical humiliation. They are suited rather, as has been shown already in the case of the bench, to blind the soul to the true nature of such humiliation, by fixing its attention unduly on outward references and outward acts, and challenging it to a *wilful* more than to a *willing* service. It were well to remember here, what the apostle says most profoundly on the subject of all such “will-worship,” with its “show of wisdom,” at the close of the second chapter of his epistle to the Colossians.

5. But again the use of the Anxious Bench is vindicated, as affording an opportunity for meet-

ing the case of awakened sinners with suitable *instruction*. When they are called out in this way, they become known. They can be addressed collectively, and conversed with individually. What they need is particular instruction, suited to their particular states. It is not by dashing water in a large way over a congregation of empty bottles, that a minister can expect to get even a few of them filled; if he would labor to any purpose, he must come down, and take each bottle separately by the neck, and pour the water in according to the capacity of its mouth.

But when we look a little into the matter, we shall find this object of instruction reduced to a perfect farce. There are two ways, in which the occupants of an Anxious Bench may be addressed. What is said, may be spoken to all at once, or they may be taken one by one in succession. If there are too many for the minister to manage himself in this way, he may engage others to take part with him in the work. This must be considered the method most congenial with the idea of the system. For the object, we are told, is to make instruction particular and specific; and how can this be accomplished so well as by taking each case separately? It is customary accordingly, when the anxious are fairly in their place, for the process of instruction to commence in this way. The minister comes to one, the first on the bench, and bending forward proceeds in a low voice to ask a question or two with regard to the person's spir-

itual condition. These are answered commonly in the most general and confused way. Then follows a short exhortation, for the most part, in the same general strain. The whole conference may not last more than some three or four minutes ; for there are a number to be conversed with ; and regard must be had, at the same time, to the patience of the congregation. So the ceremony passes forward to a second, and then to a third, and so on, till all have their turn. And this is called spiritual instruction ! If a physician were seen handling a dozen of patients in the same style, the spectacle might well call for derision. But after all, it would be no such mummery as we have here. One of the most difficult and delicate functions a minister is called to perform, is that of giving counsel to awakened sinners. None calls for more caution and discrimination. It is hard to ascertain correctly the state of the spiritual patient, and hard to suit the prescription wisely to his particular wants. It is so, where there may be the fullest opportunity for free, calm investigation, in the family visit, or in a private interview. But here, where all surrounding influences conspire to complicate the difficulty to the greatest extent, in the midst of commotion without and commotion within, it is pretended to dispose of a dozen such cases perhaps in the course of half an hour. And to make the matter worse, if the number of the anxious be considerable, this, that, and the other helper is called in, some crude exhorter perhaps, some strippling student just starting on

his way *towards* the ministry, or some forward novice, himself still in the swaddling clothes of the new birth, to take part in the solemn ghostly work, under the same form. And is it possible, that sensible men, in the fair use of their senses, can fail to be struck with the absurdity of such a process? The only fair parallel to it, in the medical sphere, would be the mockery of three or four raw practitioners going the rounds of a hospital, and administering to fifty cases of diversified diseases, within the same time, as many doses of Thompson's mixture, *Number Six*. In the latter case, the thing would be counted and called *quackery* of the first degree; and it is hard to see why it should go under any softer appellation in the former. The only difference might seem to be, in the solemnity of the interests involved in the two different circles of action. The Thompsonian tampers only with the life of the body, while the spiritual practitioner plays blindly with the precious life of the soul.

If "profitable for instruction" at all then, the Anxious Bench must be made subservient to this end, in a different way. Considering the circumstances of the case, the only rational course with a company thus brought forward, is to spend the few minutes that can be devoted to them, in counsels and exhortations addressed to them collectively. Let it not be said, that such instructions must needs lack point. The cases of the truly awakened are always sufficiently near alike, to admit of a large amount,

of most pointed and pertinent direction in the same form for all; and one who is truly a well-instructed scribe in the Gospel, will be able to address an Anxious Bench to much more purpose in this way, than if he were to pass round directing a few remarks to each one separately. But is it necessary to call them out from the congregation, for this purpose? The same truths may just as well be presented to inquirers, as included in the general audience, and it might reasonably be expected, in the case of the truly serious, with much better effect. But is it not desirable, we are asked, to have inquirers together by themselves! No doubt, there may be an advantage in this. But let it be with fitting time and place; not under circumstances, which can hardly fail to obstruct and defeat all the purposes, that should be aimed at in the case.*

The Anxious Bench is of no account, in any view, as a help to instruction; and it is not hard

* "Let it not be said, that inviting to "anxious seats" is the only effectual method of ascertaining, who are under serious impressions, and who are not. Why is it not quite as effectual to give a public invitation to all who are in any degree seriously impressed, or anxious, to remain after the congregation is dismissed, or to meet their pastor the next evening, in some convenient apartment, for the purpose of disclosing their feelings, and of being made the subjects of instruction and prayer. Nay, why is not the latter method very much preferable to the former? It surely gives quite as good an opportunity to ascertain numbers, and to distinguish persons and cases. It affords a far better opportunity, to give distinct and appropriate instruction to particular individuals."—Dr. Miller. *Letter to Dr. Sprague.*

to perceive, that as a general thing, where it is used, this does not form in reality its main recommendation, in the eyes of its friends. It may be convenient to advocate the use of the measure on this ground, and consistency will require always some show of improving it accordingly. The anxious, in one way or another, must be instructed and directed after they have come out. But just at this point, there is apt to appear a sort of giving way in the general pressure of the occasion, as though the main object of it had been already reached, in the coming out itself. It often happens, that a very short exhortation is allowed to wind up the whole scene; or it becomes evident that the conversation with the anxious is protracted, amid the flagging interest of the congregation, with mechanical rather than with living force. This, where order and sobriety still continue to assert their proper rights, in the feelings of the people. Where that is not the case, it will be contrived to keep up the excitement still, in connection with the show of instruction, in such way that this last shall come but little into view, while all stress is laid upon the first. The anxious then are encouraged to weep aloud, cry out and wring their hands. Now they are enveloped in the loud tones of some stimulating spiritual song. Then there is prayer, which soon becomes as loud; commencing perhaps with a single voice, but flowing quickly into a sea of tumultuating sounds, from which no sense can be extracted even by the keenest ear. The mourners besiege the "altar,"

pell-mell, kneeling, or it may be floundering flat upon the floor, and all joining in the general noise. Then may be heard perhaps the voice of the preacher, shouting some commonplace word of exhortation, which nobody hears or regards ; while at different points, vague, crude expostulations and directions are poured into the ears of the struggling suppliants, by "brethren," now suddenly transformed into spiritual counsellors, who might be at a loss themselfes to explain, at any other time, a single point in religion. In due time, one and another are *brought through* ; and thus new forms of disorder, shouting, clapping, &c., are brought into play. In this way, the interest of the occasion, such as it is, may be kept up till a late hour. But who will pretend to say, that *instruction* has been regarded or intended, as a leading object in any part of the process ?

6. Lastly, it is said that the anxious should be called out, in order that they may be made the subjects of *prayer*. They need the prayers of the Church ; and the church, it may be supposed, has a heart to plead with God in their behalf. But how shall this be, if they are not known ? By the Anxious Bench they are brought into view, piteously seeking an interest in the prayers of God's people ; whose bowels of compassion cannot fail to be stirred by the spectacle.

This might seem to be the great object, in the case of such methodistical displays as we have just had under observation. But scenes of this

sort have no tendency to stimulate the spirit of prayer. They form an element, unfriendly if not absolutely fatal to the true idea of devotion. This is evident generally, from a certain character of irreverence, often grossly profane, that is sure to put itself forward in such circumstances, in proportion exactly to the strength of the reigning excitement. And in any case, there is reason to believe that more is lost than gained for the anxious, as it regards this interest, by the commotion necessarily connected with their movement to the anxious bench. It is a suspicious kind of prayer at best that can be engaged, in such circumstances, only by the *sight* of its objects, theatrically paraded to produce effect, without the power of a more general interest. But it is not necessary that the awakened should be unknown, in the church to which they belong. They may be discovered without the aid of the Anxious Bench, and can be carried so upon the hearts of God's people, in the sanctuary and in the closet, with an interest far more deep and active, than any that is produced in the other way.

I know of no other ground, than those which have now been considered, on which the use of the Anxious Bench can be vindicated with any plausible defence. And as these separately taken have no force, so neither can they be allowed to weigh any thing collectively, against the condemnation, in which the system is properly involved.

CHAPTER VI.

The system of the bench tends to disorder.—Connects itself readily with a vulgar and irreverent style in religion.—Women praying in public.—Influence unfavorable to deep, earnest piety.—Relation of the system to that of the CATECHISM.

The Anxious Bench tends naturally to disorder. Where any considerable excitement prevails, it is almost impossible for the measure to be applied, without confusion and commotion. It is common indeed to have it said, in the accounts given afterwards of such occasions, that they were conducted in a quiet and orderly way. But the true idea of quiet and order, is apt not to be understood; for it not unfrequently happens, that these accounts themselves, in close connection with such a statement, present evidence sufficient to show it not strictly correct.*

* “In giving accounts of similar visitations of mercy in other places, our correspondents sometimes take especial care to let us know that all things were done “decently and in order.” It by this is meant that all was quiet, and conducted with measured propriety and entire regard to the prejudice of those who are opposed to religious excitements; then we cannot say so much of the revival in _____ church. For there was noise there not a little, *measured propriety* not much,

Some appear to think, that there is no disorder at such times, unless it comes to loud noise and gross confusion, in the style of the Methodists. But the proper order of the sanctuary may be seriously unsettled, long before it has gone so far as this. The measure involves irregularity to some extent, in its very nature, and opens the way for extravagance. It is always ready accordingly to run into disorder. It leads naturally, if encouraged, to more striking deviations

&c." *Luth. Obs.* Nov. 11, 1842.—"We had no confusion, but considerable noise—and, dear br. how could it be otherwise? Fifty and sixty souls crying to God for mercy, some finding peace and praising God, Christians conversing with, and praying for mourners, &c." *Corresp. Luth. Obs.*, Apr. 14, 1843.—The following would seem to be quite orderly. "On one occasion the whole church, that is the mass of professors of religion who were present, came forward in a body, including men and women, old and young, married, and unmarried, and prostrating themselves around the altar and in the aisles, renewed their covenant with God and solemnly pledged themselves to increased efforts for the conversion of the impenitent." *Dec. 2, 1842.* Also the following as reported, *Apr. 7, 1843*, by one who has written a book on revivals. Mr. S., a very moral and worthy man, "became awakened and converted in his own house, just the night before our meeting commenced." The next evening, when the call was given for the anxious to come forward, he passed up to the altar, and asked leave to speak. This granted, he cried out, "O my old companions and friends, who of you will now come and take me by the hand, and go to heaven with me? Last night at midnight, God blessed my soul, and I must now tell you what he has done for me!" The effect was electric. "Where are you my brethren who have covenanted with God?" he asked again. "Instantly there was a general rush from all parts of the house, and I suppose every male member in the church came up to the altar to grasp our dear br. by the hand, and covenanted to go to heaven together. O what a scene! We all wept together.—It happened the first night of our meeting, and a most glorious revival followed."

from the line of Christian sobriety. It forms the threshold properly to the whole system of New Measures. We may pretend to draw a line between it and other more noisy and disorderly forms of action, but the line will be an arbitrary one, separating things that after all are inwardly related. The general principle of the Anxious Bench, and its proper soul, are substantially the principle and soul of the entire system to which it belongs. Let it be considered orderly and edifying to call out the anxious in this way, and why should they not be encouraged as well to surround the altar on their knees, or to lay themselves down in token of their humiliation in the dust ?* If one measure of irregularity and noise may be allowed on the principle that we should give room to the Spirit, why should not a larger amount of the same be tolerated on the same plea ? “Should *man* enforce ‘decent’ silence”—asks the Editor of the Luthe-

* “If I were to place myself on what is called an *anxious seat*, or should kneel down before a whole congregation to be prayed for, I know that I should be strangely agitated, but I do not believe that it would be of any permanent utility. But if it should produce some good effect, am I at liberty to resort to anything in the worship of God, which I think will be useful ? If such things are lawful and useful, why not add other circumstances, to increase the effect ? Why not require the penitent to appear in a white sheet, or to be clothed in sack-cloth, with ashes on his head ? and, these, remember, are Scriptural signs of humiliation. And on these principles, who can reasonably object to holy water, to incense, and the use of pictures or images in the worship of God ? All these things came into the Church upon the same principle, of devising *new measures* to do good.” *Thoughts on Religious Experience*, by DR. ALEXANDER, Page 72.

ran Observer, in view of a scene where "crushed sinners," it is said, "prostrate upon their knees, lay scattered around the altar, the females in one group and the males in another," and the united tones of all together, reminded him of the noise of many waters—"Should *man* enforce 'decent' silence when *God's power* had produced 'strong crying and tears?' Should we prescribe limits to the workings of divine grace, and say to the swelling waves of overwhelming contrition, thus far shall ye come and no further?" The apology was intended to cover only a certain measure of noise and confusion. But it is of sufficient breadth plainly for any extent of extravagance, we may be pleased to imagine. The most frantic disciple of Winebrenner could ask no more, to justify his greatest outrages on common decency and common sense. Screaming, shouting, jumping, tumbling, and in one word, the whole wildfire of fanaticism, including the "holy laugh," and the "holy grin," might be vindicated in the same way. Only let persons persuade themselves that the "power of *God*" within them *must* reveal itself in this style, and all becomes at once rational and right. For there are *diversities of operations*; and it should be remembered, that "rules of propriety are conventional and often very arbitrary things, and so is taste; what is thought decent in one community may be deemed very disorderly in another; what is grating discord to one ear, may be charming concord to another." Even Mr.

Winebrenner himself, when interrogated on the subject of noise, only answers, "What is from heaven I approve of, but what is from men I disapprove of ;" though he goes on immediately to sanction "loud groaning, crying, shouting, clapping of hands, jumping, falling down, &c." as forms in which a divine influence may be expected at times to work. Still he "has no inclination to justify all sorts of noise and bodily exercises." The truth is, as already said, that no satisfactory stopping place can be found, in the system of New Measures. It has a life and spirit of its own, that begin to be developed in the simple Anxious Bench, and naturally flow onward from that point, to the very worst excesses. Good men may try to hold the stream in check, some at one point and some at another ; but it will not consent to be held within the limits imposed upon it by *their* sense of propriety. It claims to have its origin in heaven, and who in such case shall presume to say to it, Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed ?

As the spirit of the Anxious Bench tends to disorder, so it connects itself also naturally and readily with a certain vulgarism of feeling in religion, that is always injurious to the worship of God, and often shows itself absolutely irreverent and profane. True religious feeling is inward and deep ; shrinks from show ; forms the mind to a subdued humble habit. "The language of experience is," says one whose word should have weight, "that it is unsafe and unwise to bring

persons, who are under religious impressions, too much into public view. The seed of the word, like the natural seed, does not vegetate well in the sun." We may say then that there is a measure of rudeness connected with this particular style of action in the Church, from the very nature of the case. It is a wrong feeling in this respect that makes it seem desirable at all, that awakened persons should be dragged thus theatrically into public view; and the process is well suited to generate wrong feelings, under the same form, in those who are subjected to its rough operation. The circumstances of such an occasion are by no means favorable to true inward solemnity, such as causes the heart to exclaim, How awful is this place! High excitement always tends to destroy men's reverence for God and sacred things. And so this "high pressure" system, as it is sometimes called, in proportion as it prevails, is always found to work. It gives rise to a style of preaching, which is often rude and coarse, as well as uncommonly vapid; and creates an appetite for such false aliment, with a corresponding want of taste for true and solid instruction. All is made to tell upon the one single object of *effect*. The pulpit is transformed, more or less, into a stage. Divine things are so *popularized*, as to be at last shorn of their dignity as well as their mystery. Anecdotes and stories are plentifully retailed, often in low, familiar, flippant style. Roughness is substituted for strength, and paradox for point. The preacher feels *himself*, and

is bent on making himself felt also by the congregation ; but God is not felt in the same proportion. In many cases, self-will and mere human passion, far more than faith or true zeal for the conversion of souls, preside over the whole occasion. Coarse personalities, and harsh denunciations, and changes rung rudely on terms the most sacred and things the most solemn, all betray the wrong spirit that prevails. But to see the character of the system, in the aspect now considered, fully disclosed, we must look at it again in its more advanced positions, where the genius that animates it is permitted to work with full scope. Here the so called awakening, on the camp ground or at the quarterly meeting, is often presented under a form that is absolutely shocking to a truly serious mind. Noise and confusion unite to overwhelm every right sentiment in the soul. Decency and order are given to the winds. A dozen perhaps are heard praying at once, in all unseemly postures, and with the most violent gestures. And, then, the form and spirit of these prayers, as far as they can be heard ! What rude familiarity with the High and Holy One ; what low belittling and caricaturing of all that is grand in the Gospel ; what gross profanity in the style of many of the petitions, with which it is pretended to storm the citadel of God's favors ! The atmosphere of such a meeting, may be exciting, intoxicating, bewildering ; but it has no power whatever to dispose the mind to devotion. There is nothing in the scene to impress those

who are present, with the sense of God's awful heart-searching presence. Very frequently, while such a chaos of prayer is going forward in full strength at one end of the house, the lookers on at the other show themselves as much at their ease, and betray as little emotion, as though they were sitting in a bar-room. They have grown obtuse to the stirring show, and feel themselves in no connection with what is going forward, except as they find an opportunity, from time to time, to fall in with the catch of some familiar revival-song, which they shout forth as boisterously as any body else. Fanaticism has no power to make God's presence felt. It is wild, presumptuous and profane, where it affects to partake most largely of the power of heaven. No wonder that the religion which is commenced and carried forward under such auspices, should show itself to be characteristically coarse and gross. Wanting true reverence for God, it will be without true charity also towards men. It is likely to be narrow, intolerant, sinister, and rabidly sectarian. All that is high will become low, and all that is beautiful be turned into vulgarity, in its hands.*

* "Fanaticism often blazes with a glaring flame, and agitates assemblies as with a hurricane or earthquake; but God is not in the fire, or the wind, or the earthquake. His presence is more commonly with the still small voice. There is no sounder characteristic of genuine devotion, than reverence. Where this is banished, the fire may burn fiercely, but it is unhallowed fire. Fanaticism, however much it may assume the garb and language of piety, is its opposite; for while the latter is mild, and sweet, and disinterested, and

One striking illustration of the coarseness of this spirit, is found in the disposition it has shown in all ages, to set aside the rule, which forbids women to speak publicly in religious assemblies. Nature itself may be said to teach us, that woman cannot quit her sphere of relative subordination with regard to man, without dishonoring herself, and losing her proper strength. And it is no small argument for the divine origin of the gospel, that while it teaches the absolute personal equality of the sexes as it had never been understood before, it still echoes, while it rightly interprets, the voice of nature with regard to this point. "I suffer not a woman to teach," says the apostle, "nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." And again, "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak.—It is a shame for a women to speak in the church." True religion supports this judgment. No female, with the Gospel in her heart, can wish to have it reversed. She would feel her nature wronged rather, in being required to appear, in the way here forbidden, before the public. But of *such* delicacy, no account is made, by the fanatical temper now under consideration. It is coarse and vulgar, and would fain show itself wiser, at this point, than Paul himself. It encourages women to pray in public, and to address promiscuous meetings, and

respectful, and affectionate, the former is proud, arrogant, censorious, selfish, carnal, and when opposed, malignant."—*Dr. Alexander's Letter to Dr. Sprague.*

by the spirit it infuses makes them willing to unsex themselves in this way. There can be no surer sign of grossness and coarseness in religion, than a disposition to tolerate this monstrous perversion, under any form.

The general system to which the Anxious Bench belongs, it may be remarked again, is unfavorable to deep, thorough and intelligent piety. This must be the case of course, if there be any truth in the observations already made with regard to its character. A system that leads to such a multitude of spurious conversions, and that makes room so largely for that low, gross, fanatical habit, which has just been described, cannot possibly be associated to any extent with the power of godliness, in its deeper and more earnest forms. The religion which it may produce, so far as it can be counted genuine, will be for the most part of a dwarfish size and sickly complexion. The "experience" of the Anxious Bench is commonly shallow. The friends of the new method often please themselves, it is true, with the idea that *their* awakenings include a vast amount of power in this way; and they are not backward to insinuate, that those who oppose their measures are ignorant of what pertains to the "depths" of experimental piety. Were such persons themselves experimentally acquainted with the pangs of the new birth, it is intimated, they would not be so easily offended with the noise and disorder of poor souls *agonizing* at the altar; and if they had ever themselves tasted the joys of pardoned

sin, they might be expected to have other ears than they now have, for the shouts and hallelujahs of the redeemed, suddenly translated in these circumstances from the power of Satan into the glorious liberty of the family of God. But in fact no "experiences" are more superficial commonly, than those which belong to this whirlwind process. The foundations of the inward life are not reached and moved by it at all. All that would be wanted often to hush an "altar-full" of chaotic cries to solemn stillness, would be that the hearts of the "agonizing" mourners should be suddenly touched with some real sense of the presence of God and their own sins. "I have heard of Thee," says Job, "with the hearing of the ear; but *now mine eye seeth thee*: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Alas, it is not the *depth* of these anxious bench and camp-meeting conversions, but their utter want of depth, that exposes them to complaint. They involve little or nothing of what the old divines call *heart work*. They bring with them no self-knowledge. They fill the Church with lean professors, who show subsequently but little concern to *grow* in grace, little capacity indeed to understand at all the free, deep, full life of the "new man" in Christ Jesus. Such converts, if they do not altogether "fall from grace," are apt to continue at least babes in the gospel, as long as they live. The natural fruit of the system is a sickly Christianity, that is sure to be defective or one-sided, both in doctrine and practice. It proceeds upon

a wrong conception of religion from the start, and error and heresy, in the nature of the case, are wrought plentifully into the very texture of all that is reached by its operations. There is involved in it a spirit of delusion, which cannot fail to show its power disastrously, after a short time, in any community in which it is suffered to prevail.

Here is another most serious charge, demanding our special attention. I have denominated the system a *heresy*, not inconsiderately or for rhetorical effect simply, but with sober calculation and design. In religion, as in life universally, theory and practice are always inseparably intertwined, in the ground of the soul. Every error is felt practically ; and wherever obliquity in conduct comes into view, it must be referred to some corresponding obliquity in principle. It is not by accident then that the system of New Measures is found producing so largely, the evil consequences which have been thus far described. Error and heresy, I repeat it, are involved in the system itself, and cannot fail sooner or later, where it is encouraged, to evolve themselves in the most mischievous results. Finneyism is only Taylorism reduced to practice, the speculative heresy of New-Haven actualized in common life. A low, shallow, pelagianizing theory of religion, runs through it from beginning to end. The fact of sin is acknowledged, but not in its true extent. The idea of a new spiritual creation is admitted, but not in its proper radical and comprehensive

form. The ground of the sinner's salvation is made to lie at last in his own separate person. The deep import of the declaration, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*, is not fully apprehended; and it is vainly imagined accordingly, that the flesh as such may be so stimulated and exalted notwithstanding, as to prove the mother of that spiritual nature, which we are solemnly assured can be born only of the Spirit. Hence all stress is laid upon the energy of the individual will, (the self-will of the flesh,) for the accomplishment of the great change in which regeneration is supposed to consist. The case is not remedied at all by the consideration, that due account is made at the same time *professedly* of the aids of God's Spirit, as indispensable in the work of conversion. The heresy lies involved in the system. This is so constructed as naturally, and in time inevitably, to engender false views of religion. Sometimes the mere purpose to serve God, in the same form with a resolution to sign a temperance pledge, is considered to be the ground of regeneration. At other times, it is made to stand in a certain state of feeling, supposed to be of supernatural origin, but apprehended notwithstanding mechanically, as the result of a spiritual process which begins and ends with the sinner himself. The experience of the supposed supernatural in this case, stands in the same relation to the actual power of the new birth, that magic bears to the true idea of a miracle. The higher force does not strictly and properly take possession of the lower,

but is presumed rather to have been reduced to the possession and service of this last, to be used by it for its own convenience. Religion does not get the sinner, but it is the sinner who "gets religion." Justification is taken to be in fact by *feeling*, not by faith ; and in this way falls back as fully into the sphere of self-righteousness, as though it were expected from works under any other form. In both the views which have been mentioned, as grounded either in a change of purpose or a change of feeling, religion is found to be in the end the product properly of the sinner himself. It is wholly subjective, and therefore visionary and false. The life of the soul must stand in something beyond itself. Religion involves the will ; but not as self-will, affecting to be its own ground and centre. Religion involves feeling ; but it is not comprehended in this as its principle. Religion is subjective also, fills and rules the individual in whom it appears; but it is not created in any sense by its subject or from its subject. The life of the branch is in the trunk. The theory we have been contemplating then, as included practically in the system of New Measures, is a great and terrible heresy ; which it is to be feared is operating, in this connection, to deceive and destroy a vast multitude of souls.

The proper fruits of Pelagianism, follow the system invariably, in proportion exactly to the extent, in which it may be suffered in any case to prevail. A most ample field for instruction with regard to this point, for all who care to re-

ceive instruction, is presented in the history of the great religious movement, over which Mr. Finney presided some years ago, in certain parts of this country. Years of faithful pastoral service, on the part of a different order of ministers, working in a wholly different style, have hardly yet sufficed, in the Northern section of the State of New York, to restore to something like spiritual fruitfulness and beauty, the field, over which this system then passed, as a wasting fire, in the fulness of its strength. The perfectionism of Oberlin, with its low conceptions of the law of God, is but a natural development of the false life, with which it is animated. The wide West abounds, in every direction, with illustrations of its mischievous action, under all imaginable forms. In many places, a morbid thirst for excitement, may be said to exhaust the whole interest, that is felt in religion. The worst errors stand in close *juxta-position*, with the most bold pretensions to the highest order of christian experience. All might seem to begin in the Spirit, and yet all is perpetually ending in the flesh. It were an easy thing too, to gather exemplifications, supporting the same lesson, from the past history of the Church. For the system, properly speaking, is not new. The same theory of religion has led, in all ages, to substantially the same style of action, and this has been followed by substantially the same bad fruits.

The question of “New Measures” then, as it claims at this time particularly the attention of

the German Churches, is one of much greater importance than some might be disposed to imagine. The truth is, this system, as we have said, has a life and spirit of its own. It may be associated to some extent, in certain hands, with the power of a more vigorous life derived from a different quarter, so as to seem comparatively sound and safe. But it ought not to be thought, on this account, that it may be incorporated practically with one order of thinking on the subject of religion, as easily as with another. It is not by accident only, that it is found connecting itself with the faults and defects that have now been mentioned. A false theory of religion is involved in it, which cannot fail to work itself out and make itself felt, in many hurtful results, wherever it gains footing in the Church. No religious community can grow and prosper, in a solid way, where it is allowed to have any considerable authority ; because it will always stand in the way of those deeper and more silent forms of action, by which alone it is possible for this end to be accomplished. It is a different system altogether that is required, to build up the interests of Christianity in a firm and sure way. A ministry apt to teach ; sermons full of unction and light ; faithful, systematic instruction ; zeal for the interests of holiness ; pastoral visitation ; catechetical training ; due attention to order and discipline ; patient perseverance in the details of the ministerial work ; these are the agencies, by which alone the kingdom of God may be expected to go steadily forward,

among any people. Where these are fully employed, there will be revivals; but they will be only as it were the natural fruit of the general culture going before, without that spasmodic, meteoric character, which too often distinguishes excitements under this name; while the life of religion will show itself abidingly at work, in the reigning temper of the Church, at all other times. Happy the congregation, that may be placed under such spiritual auspices! Happy for our German Zion, if such might be the system that should prevail, to the exclusion of every other, within her borders! We may style it, for distinction sake, the system of the *Catechism*. It is another system wholly from that which we have been contemplating in this tract. We find the attempt made in some cases, it is true, to incorporate the power of the Catechism with the use of new measures. But the union is unnatural, and can never be inward and complete. The two systems involve at the bottom, two different theories of religion. The spirit of the Anxious Bench is at war with the spirit of the Catechism. Where it comes decidedly to prevail, catechetical instruction, and the religious training of the young generally, are not likely to be maintained with much effect; and it will not be strange, if they should be openly slighted even, and thrust out of the way as an incumbrance to the Gospel, rather than a help.* What

* A graphic illustration of this point was furnished lately, it is said, by a minister of the New Measure school, in this neighborhood. On the morning of a sacramental sabbath, his

is wrought in the way of the Catechism is considered to be of man, what is wrought by the Bench is taken readily for the work of God. And the reason of this is near at hand. The Catechism is indeed weak in the hands of those who have this judgment. They have no inward power to make themselves felt, in this way. But they *seem* to have power in the use of the Bench ; and it is no wonder they should magnify it accordingly. The systems are antagonistic. Particular men, standing under one standard, may be to some extent entangled in views and practices properly belonging to the other ; but so far they must be inconsistent with themselves. Each system, as such, has its own life and soul, in virtue of which it cannot truly coalesce with the other. They cannot flourish and be in vigorous force together. The Bench is against the Catechism, and the Catechism against the Bench. I mean of course not the Catechism as a mere dead form, in the way in which the

catechetical class was admitted, by profession of faith, to the Lord's table and the full communion of the Church. On the very same evening, they were drawn forward to the anxious bench, for the purpose of conversion ! Towards the close of the year 1842, we find in the Lutheran Observer a glowing report from this same workman of splendid results effected by his ministry, on a different field, which he was obliged soon after to leave. In a single protracted meeting, in one case, he was able to muster "about one hundred and fifty" converts. Since that time, he has reported another revival, which came and went so rapidly, that the community generally had no knowledge of it till it was all over. No wonder such a man should put honor on the Bench and scorn on the Catechism, and rail out from the pulpit against the present tract, as though it were the "abomination of desolation" itself.

original order of the Church, has been too often abused ; and it is silly, if not something worse, to insist upon *this* view of it, when the two systems are drawn into contrast, as though there could be no other alternative to the Bench than the Catechism without life. It is the living Catechism, the Catechism awakened and active, that is intended in this opposition. As such, it stands the representative and symbol of a system, embracing its own theory of religion, and including a wide circle of agencies, peculiar to itself, for carrying this theory into effect. These agencies, in the pulpit and out of it, will be understood, and honored, and actively applied, in proportion exactly as the spirit of the system may prevail ; and in the same proportion the Christianity of the Church may be expected to show itself large, deep, full, vigorous and free. Between such a Christianity and that which is the product of the Bench, there can be no comparison ; and it must be counted an immense misfortune, in the case of any religious denomination, when the views, feelings, and forms of action, that are represented by this, through the force of a perverse judgment, gain such ground, as to push the other system aside. It must be ever a wretched choice, when the *Bench* is preferred to the *Catechism*.

CHAPTER VII.

System of the Catechism.—Its theological ground and constitution.—Its general methods and forms of action.—Historical exemplification.

It seems to be due to the whole subject, that the system of the **CATECHISM**, as here opposed to the system of the *Bench*, should be a little more fully described. This might well form the theme of a separate tract. As a closing chapter to the present publication, it can claim our attention only in a very general way.

The Anxious Bench has stood before us as the representative and type of a certain religious system, having its own theory and its own practice, both replete with dangerous error. In the same way, we exhibit the Catechism as the representative and type of another system, including in like manner both theory and practice, of an opposite character. It is not meant of course, that the whole system originated in the Catechism, or that it must stand or fall in every instance with the use of the Catechism; but simply that this belongs to it, in principle and constitution, and is well fitted at the same time to stand as a specimen of its general meaning and force.

The theory of religion in which the system of the Catechism stands, is vastly more deep and comprehensive, and of course vastly more earnest also, than that which lies at the foundation of the other system. This last we have seen to be characteristically pelagian, with narrow views of the nature of sin, and confused apprehensions of the difference between flesh and spirit; involving in the end the gross and radical error, that conversion is to be considered, in one shape or another, the product of the sinner's own will, and not truly and strictly a new creation in Christ Jesus by the power of God. This is an old heresy, of which notice is taken by the apostle Paul in the second chapter of his epistle to the Church at Colosse, and which has been actively at work in the Christian world, under various forms and disguises, from that time to the present. It has often put on the fairest appearances, seeming even to go beyond the general life of the Church, in the measure of its zeal and spirituality. It can easily affect also, deceiving itself as much as others, to honor the grace of God, and to derive all its life from a source beyond itself. But still the imagination remains, that this life is something that stands in the individual separately taken, the property of a particular *self*, rather than a more general power in which every such particular self is required to lose itself, that "old things may pass away and all things become new." The man *gets* religion, and so stands over it and above it, in his own fancy, as the owner of property in

any other case. From such monstrous perversion, the worst consequences may be expected to flow. The system may generate action ; but it will be morbid action, one-sided, spasmodic, ever leaning towards fanaticism. In opposition to this, the true theory of religion carries us continually beyond the individual, to the view of a far deeper and more general form of existence in which his particular life is represented to stand. Thus sin is not simply the offspring of a particular will, putting itself forth in the form of actual transgressions, but a wrong habit of humanity itself, a general and universal force, which includes and rules the entire existence of the individual man, from the very start.* The disease is organic, rooted in the race, and not to be overcome in any case by a force less deep and general than itself. As well might we look for the acorn to forsake in growing the type of its proper species, and put forth the form of a mountain ash or stately elm. "That which is

* This point is well maintained in a Defence of the Second Article of the Augsburg Confession, ("gegen alte und neue Gegener,") by Dr. *Sartorius*, one of the most distinguished Lutheran divines of the present age. Had the treatise been written expressly against the theory of sin brought forward some time since, in this country, by Dr. *Taylor* of New Haven, of whom probably the German theologian had never heard, it could hardly have furnished a refutation of it more thorough and complete. It is directed against the Rationalism of modern Germany, which only reiterates here the Pelagianism of the Romish Church, as we find it withstood in the ever memorable Confession of Augsburg. This shallow theory, as exhibited by Dr. *Taylor*, constitutes as we have seen the very soul of *Finneyism*, which is simply another name for the system of the *Anxious Bench*.

born of the flesh is flesh." So deep and broad is the ruin, from which man is to be delivered by the gospel. And here again, the same depth and breadth are presented to us also in the Christian salvation itself. Man is the subject of it, but not the author of it, in any sense. His nature is restorable, but it can never restore itself. The restoration to be real, must begin *beyond* the individual. In this case as in the other, the general must go before the particular, and support it as its proper ground. Thus humanity, fallen in Adam, is made to undergo a resurrection in Christ, and so restored, flows over organically, as in the other case, to all in whom its life appears. The sinner is saved then by an inward living union with Christ, as real as the bond by which he has been joined in the first instance to Adam. This union is reached and maintained, through the medium of the Church, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It constitutes a new life, the ground of which is not in the particular subject of it at all, but in Christ, the organic root of the Church. The particular subject lives, not properly speaking in the acts of his own will separately considered, but in the power of a vast generic life, that lies wholly beyond his will, and has now began to manifest itself through him, as the law and type of his will itself, as well as of his whole being. As born of the Spirit, in contradistinction from the flesh, he is himself spiritual, and capable of true righteousness. Thus his salvation begins, and thus it is carried forward, till it becomes com-

plete in the resurrection of the great day. From first to last, it is a power which he does not so much apprehend, as he is apprehended by it, and comprehended in it, and carried along with it, as something infinitely more deep and vast than himself.

Now as one or the other of the two opposite theories of religion, thus briefly described, may be found to reign, not in the written or oral creed of those who take an interest in the subject, but in the inmost core of their life, the result will appear, with characteristic difference, in the whole tenor and bearing of their religion itself, practically considered. And this difference will be substantially that of the two systems now compared, the religion of the Catechism and the religion of the Bench.

It might seem indeed, at first view, that the theory which sets the particular before the general, in this case, would be found more favorable than its opposite to earnest and vigorous religious action, in every direction. And so it is often taken to be, in fact. The other scheme, involving as it seems to do a helpless dependence of the individual upon a generality deeper and more comprehensive than himself, first as it regards sin, and then again as it regards righteousness, is held up to reproach, as a view that cuts the sinews of moral action, and may be expected, where it prevails, to lie like a paralysing incubus on all the energies of the Church. But this idea is contradicted by universal experience, as well as by the true philosophy of life.

To be moved deeply and strongly in any case, man *must* be wrought upon by a force, deeper and more comprehensive than his separate self. Great purposes and great efforts appear, only when the sense of the general overpowers the sense of the particular, and the last is constrained to become tributary to the tendencies and purposes of the first. There may be a great show of strength, where the man acts simply from and for himself; noise, agitation, passion, reaching even to violence; but it will be only a display of imbecility when all is done. The will acting in this way is very weakness itself; and all the blustering and violence it may put on, serves but to expose the deficiency of strength that prevails within. To acquire, in any case, true force, it must fall back on a power more general than itself. And so it is found, that in the sphere of religion particularly, the pelagian theory is always vastly more impotent for practical purposes, than that to which it stands opposed. The action which it produces may be noisy, fitful, violent; but it can never carry with it the depth, the force, the fullness, that are found to characterise the life of the soul, when set in motion by the other view.

Conviction of sin is never deep and thorough, till it comes to a clear consciousness, with the sinner, that his sinful life is rooted in a sinful nature, older and broader than himself, which he has no power to renovate or control. Nor is the Christian salvation rightly understood, till it is felt that it must be something more deep and

comprehensive than the will of the individual subject himself, in whom it is to appear. Such experience carrying the man beyond himself, and merging the consciousness of the particular in the consciousness of the general, may be much less ostentatious and much more quiet than the experience generated by the other view ; but it will be so only because it is far less superficial, and far more full of truth. Religion in this form becomes strictly a life, the life of God in the soul. So far as this life prevails it is tranquil, profound, and free. It overcomes the world ; "not by might and by power," the unequal, restless, fitful, and spasmodic efforts of the flesh, "but by the Spirit of the Lord." The believer can do all things, standing in Christ.

And as this theory of religion is the ground of all deep experience in the case of the individual Christian, so it gives rise to the most vigorous and comprehensive action, on the part of the Church, for carrying into effect the provisions of the gospel for the salvation of men. In proportion exactly as it is understood and felt, will such action display itself in all its proper forms ; and under no other circumstances can any agency be employed for the same end, that will be entitled at all to take its place.

From first to last, the action now mentioned will go forward, under a due practical recognition of the truth, that both the ruin of man and his recovery rest in a ground, which is beyond himself as an individual. If saved at all, he is to be saved by the force of a spiritual constitu-

tion, established by God for the purpose, the provisions of which go far beyond the resources of his own will, and are expected to reach him, not so much through the measure of his own particular life, as by the medium of a more general life, with which he is to be filled and animated from without. This spiritual constitution is brought to bear upon him in the *Church*, by means of institutions and agencies which God has appointed, and clothed with power, expressly for this end. Hence where the system of the Catechism prevails, great account is made of the Church, and all reliance placed upon the means of grace comprehended in its constitution, as all sufficient under God for the accomplishment of its own purposes. The means are felt to be something more than mere devices of human ingenuity, and are honoured and diligently used accordingly as the “wisdom of God and the power of God” unto salvation. Due regard is had to the idea of the Church as something more than a bare abstraction, the conception of an aggregate of parts mechanically brought together. It is apprehended rather as an organic life, springing perpetually from the same ground, and identical with itself at every point. In this view, the Church is truly the *mother* of all her children. They do not impart life to her, but she imparts life to them. Here again the general is felt to go before the particular, and to condition all its manifestations. The Church is in no sense the product of individual christianity, as though a number of persons should first re-

ceive the heavenly fire in separate streams, and then come into such a spiritual connection comprising the whole ; but individual christianity is the product, always and entirely, of the Church, as existing previously, and only revealing its life in this way. Christ lives in the Church, and *through* the Church in its particular members ; just as Adam lives in the human race generically considered, and through the race in every individual man. This view of the relation of the Church to the salvation of the individual, exerts an important influence, in the case before us, on the whole system of action, by which it is sought to reach this object.

Where it prevails, a serious interest will be taken in the case of children, as proper subjects for the Christian salvation, from the earliest age. Infants born in the Church, are regarded and treated as members of it from the beginning, and this privilege is felt to be something more than an empty shadow. The idea of infant conversion is held in practical honor ; and it is counted not only possible but altogether natural, that children growing up in the bosom of the Church, under the faithful application of the means of grace, should be quickened into spiritual life in a comparatively quiet way, and spring up numerously, "as willows by the water-courses," to adorn the Christian profession, without being able at all to trace the process by which the glorious change has been effected.* Where the

* To cut off occasion, from such as *seek* occasion, for misrepresentation, it may be well enough to remark here,

Church has lost all faith in this method of conversion, either not looking for it at all, or looking for it only in rare and extraordinary instances, it is an evidence that she is under the force of a wrong religious theory, and practically subjected, at least in some measure, to the false system whose symbol is the Bench. If conversion is not expected nor sought in this way among infants and children, it is not likely often to occur. All is made to hang methodistically on sudden and violent experiences, belonging to the individual separately taken, and holding little or no connection with his relations to the Church previously. Then as a matter of course, baptism becomes a barren sign, and the children

(though in ordinary circumstances the remark might seem to be wholly superfluous,) that the idea of such a comparatively silent process of conversion, as something to be desired and sought in the case of infants and children, does not imply at all that regeneration in any case is a *gradual* change. Nor is it intended to throw discredit by any means, on all sudden conversions in later life, attended with experience more or less violent and marked, in the case of those who have grown up to some age in an impenitent state. Conversions of this sort under proper circumstances, are entitled to entire confidence, and may be expected to occur frequently under faithful ministrations on the part of the Church. But the error is, in making this the exclusive conception of the process. It is of immense account to hold fast, with Luther and the other Reformers, to the other conception, at the same time. Regeneration is instantaneous, but as such not to be perceived directly in any case by the subject. It can be perceived only in its effects. But these belong to *conversion*, the change that flows from regeneration. Regeneration may take place in the womb, or in infancy, or in early childhood, or in adult age. In every case, its symbol is the *wind*; "thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth."

of the Church are left to grow up like the children of the world, under general most heartless, most disastrous neglect. The exemplifications of such a connection between wrong theory and wrong practice, in this case, are within the reach of the most common observation. Only where the system of the Catechism is in honor and vigorous force, do we ever find a properly earnest and comprehensive regard exhibited for the salvation of the young ; a regard, that operates, not partially and occasionally only, but follows its subjects with all-compassing interest, like the air and light of heaven, from the first breath of infancy onwards ; a regard, that cannot be satisfied, in their behalf, with the spasmodic experience of the anxious bench, but travails in birth for them continually, till Christ be formed in their hearts the hope of glory.

Thus due regard is had to the *family*, the domestic constitution, as a vital and fundamental force, in the general organization of the Church ; and all proper pains are taken to promote religion in families, as the indispensable condition of its prosperity under all other forms. Parents are engaged to pray for their children, and to watch over them with true spiritual solicitude, continually endeavoring to draw them to Christ. With such feelings, they will have of course a family altar, and daily sacrifices of praise and prayer, in the midst of their house. They will be careful too, to instil into the minds of their children the great truths of religion, "in the house and by the way." Catechetical instruc-

tion in particular, will be faithfully employed, from the beginning. And to crown all, the power of a pious and holy example will be sought, as necessary to impart life to all other forms of influence. All this belongs properly to the system of the Catechism.

In close connection with this domestic training, the ministrations of the Church come in, under a more public form, to carry forward the same work. The Church feels herself bound to watch over the children born in her bosom, and to follow them with counsel and instruction and prayer, from one year always on to another. They are required to attend upon the services of the sanctuary. Especially, the process of Catechetical instruction is employed, with constancy and patience, to cast if possible both the understanding and the heart into the mould of evangelical doctrine.

The regular administration of the word and sacraments, forms of course an essential part of the same system. The ordinances of the sanctuary, being of divine institution, are regarded as channels of a power higher than themselves; and are administered accordingly with such earnestness and diligence as bespeak a proper confidence in their virtue, under this view.

Then again, the system includes the wide range of the proper pastoral work, as distinguished from that of the pulpit. The faithful minister is found preaching the gospel from house to house, as well as in a more public way; visiting the families that are under his care, expressly

for this purpose ; conversing with old and young, on the great subject of personal religion ; mingling with the poor, in their humble dwellings, as well as with those in better circumstances ; ministering the instructions of religion, or its consolations, at the bed-side of the sick or dying ; and in one word laying himself out in continual labors of love towards all, as the servant of all for Jesus' sake. The holiness of his own life particularly becomes, in these circumstances, an agency powerful beyond all others, to recommend and enforce the gospel he is called to preach. To all who know him, his very presence carries with it the weight of an impressive testimony in favor of the truth.

The object in all these efforts, is not simply to bring sinners in the first instance to repentance and faith, but to build them up through the knowledge of the truth, in all righteousness, unto everlasting life. The ministry, with all the resources of the sanctuary, is made to look to "the perfecting of the saints," and "the edifying of the body of Christ," as its main end. Individual christians, and each congregation of believers as a whole, are to be established, strengthened, and carried forward, with regular and symmetrical growth, to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is characteristic of the opposite system, that it makes conversion, in its own sense, to be the all in all of the gospel economy, and the development of the Christian life subsequently a mere secondary interest ; as though by bending all efforts imme-

diately towards the accomplishment of the first object, separately taken, the last might be safely left, in a great measure, to take care of itself. All this on the false principle again, that the Church is to be enlarged by additions mechanically brought into connection with it from without, rather than by the extension of its own organic life from within. But in the gospel, all is made to hang on the growth of the Church itself, in grace and living power. This is the great object to be reached after in the ministerial and pastoral work ; and it is only as this is in some good measure secured, that this work can be brought to bear with proper efficiency on the world beyond. Where the Church is in a living and growing state, "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, and according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of herself, in love," she becomes by this very process of growth itself, the fountain of spiritual life to the dead mass with which she is surrounded ; taking up the element of humanity as "flesh," and by the assimilating force of her own vitality, changing it into humanity as "spirit and life." In such circumstances, all the functions of the mystical body, and that of the ministry of course among the rest, will be carried forward through their proper organs, with full power and effect. Where this order is not maintained, there may be exhibited often in the work of the gospel, vast excitement, and great show of strength, and what

for the moment shall seem to be immense effect; but it will be a manifestation of comparative weakness in fact, by which only the surface of life's broad stream has been tossed into waves, while its interior depths roll quietly forward as before. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is in the kingdom of grace, as in the kingdom of nature; the greatest, deepest, most comprehensive and lasting changes, are effected constantly, not by special, sudden, vast explosions of power, but by processes that are gentle, and silent, and so minute and common as hardly to attract the notice of the world, which is so deeply affected by their action. God is not with so much effect in the whirlwind, earthquake and tempest, as in the "still small voice" of the falling dew or growing grass. And so in the Church, the common and the constant are of vastly more account, than the special and transient; the noiseless and the unseen of immensely greater force, than that "which cometh with observation," and fills the world with the sound of its presence.

Such, in a general view, is the action generated by the system of the Catechism, for the great purposes of the gospel, as compared with that which flows legitimately from the system of the Bench.

This system then gives no encouragement to religious torpor or sloth. That some take shelter under its name, who are opposed to all that is serious or earnest in religion, while they affect to magnify the Catechism, and the common

ministrations of the sanctuary, only shows that they have no communion in fact with the system in its true life. They resemble the Jews of old, who trusted in the outward temple, while they showed themselves false to all that made the temple sacred. Dead churches and dead ministers, that turn catechetical instruction into an empty form, and make no account of inward living piety, as a necessary qualification for membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, have no right most assuredly to identify themselves with the system of the Catechism; and it is a gross wrong inflicted upon it by such as seek to bring it into discredit, when such instances of orthodox formality and deadness are taken to be proper exemplifications of its character and power, as though it had a natural tendency to beget death in this way, rather than life. It produces action and calls for strength, to a far greater extent than the system of the Bench. It is the greatest and most difficult work in the world, to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, in the spirit of this system; which might well constrain even an apostle to exclaim, *Who is sufficient for these things?* God forbid, that we should countenance for a moment the dreadful supposition, that the work of the ministry calls for no special zeal, no missionary devotion, no full and entire consecration to Christ, no earnest concern for the salvation of immortal souls; or that a church may be considered in a right state, where the voice of prayer is silent, the tear of penitence unknown, the hand of benevolence palsied, the

language of Canaan despised, and the power of godliness treated as an idle dream. A church without life is an abomination in the sight of God. The ministry is horribly profaned, when it is made a retreat for worldlings, drones, hirelings that care not for the flock but only for the fleece. "*Instant, in season and out of season,*" is its proper watchword, the motto that floats on its heaven-descended banner; and it is under the system of the Catechism precisely, that the power of this is fully understood and felt, and may be expected to come, in a practical way, broadly into view.

In this system, room is found naturally and easily, of course, for all evangelical interests. It is a prodigious abuse of terms, when some of the most vital and prominent of these, are crowded out of their proper place, and made to stand in another connection entirely; when social prayer-meetings, for instance, and the various missionary and benevolent operations of the Church, are divorced in imagination from the regular life of Christianity, and ranked in the same bad category with such tricks of human device as the anxious bench. Family prayer, and social prayer, belong as much as private prayer itself, to the very nature of the Church. The spirit of missions is identical with the spirit of Christianity. For a church or a minister to oppose prayer-meetings, or efforts to send the gospel to the heathen, or efforts to raise up faithful ministers, or to circulate bibles and tracts, for the promotion of genuine godliness at home,

is to oppose Christ. We hear, it is true, of churches and ministers that look upon all these things as fanaticism, while they pretend to honor the good old way of the Catechism; but such ministers and churches, in the emphatic language of the apostle, "lie and do not the truth." They honor neither the Catechism, nor the bible, nor Christ. And the evidence of this appears invariably in the fact, that the same ministers and churches hate all serious, earnest godliness, are perfectly worldly in their temper, make no account of the new birth, and show no sense of religion whatever, any farther than as it may be supposed to consist in a decent morality, and an outward use, to some extent, of its standing ordinances.

It is a most unfair view again of the system of the Catechism, to think of it, or speak of it, as unfriendly to all special and extraordinary forms of action, in the work of the gospel. The system, it is true, makes more account of the regular, the ordinary, and the general, than it does of the occasional and the special; more account of rills, and the perpetually flowing breezes of heaven, than of mountain torrents, water-spouts, and storms. But it does not by any means preclude the presence of what is out of the usual way, or refuse to suit itself to its requirements when it comes. The extraordinary in this case however, is found to stand *in* the ordinary, and grows forth from it without violence, so as to bear the same character of natural and free power. It is not the water-spout, but the fruitful plentiful

shower, causing the fields to sing, and the trees of the wood to clap their hands for joy. Such is the true conception of a *Revival*. For such special showers of grace, it is the privilege of the Church to hope, and her duty to pray, at all times. To call in question either the reality or the desirableness of them, is a monstrous scepticism, that may be said to border on the sin of open infidelity itself. They are the natural product of the proper life of the Church. Wherever the system of the Catechism is rightly understood, and faithfully applied, it may be expected to generate revivals in this form; though in proportion to the measure of this faithful use, it may be said, the ordinary and the extraordinary as here distinguished will be found continually coming closer and closer together, till in the end they may appear almost identical, and the church shall seem to bask, as on the "Delectable Mountains," in the perpetual sun-light of heaven itself. This may be denominated of a truth, her "best state," and we may add her most true, proper and natural state. Churches that hate revivals, may be said emphatically to "love death." Every faithful pastor will be concerned, to see his ministrations crowned with such special effusions of God's Spirit; and will stand prepared at the same time to hail with joy the first indications of their approach, and to put forth special efforts for the purpose of turning them to the largest account. These efforts however, will be in the general form of his ordinary ministrations and services. If need be, however,

they may be allowed to involve, to some extent, modes of action entirely *new*; it is not the mere circumstance of novelty of course, that forms the true ground of objection to "New Measures," technically so called, but the spirit, life, principle, of a certain system rather, as old as Christianity itself, which the measures thus designated are found to embody and represent. A revival, in the very nature of the case, so far as it may be a special visitation, transcending the ordinary life of a particular church, must call forth special action, on the part of both minister and people. Meetings for prayer will naturally be multiplied. The call for preaching will be increased. Protracted meetings, as they are styled, may be required. Visiting from house to house, and direct personal conversation with sinners on the state of their souls, are carried forward of course with more diligence and vigor than before. Sermons and exhortations may be expected to become more earnest and pungent. A greater amount of feeling will prevail in meetings. It will become necessary to have special conferences with the awakened. All this is a simple extension of the processes, by which the ordinary life of the Church is to be maintained, made necessary by the special outpouring of God's Spirit, and fairly comprehended, from first to last, in the system of the Catechism as distinguished from the system of the Bench.

It is true indeed that the spirit of the Bench may take possession of these measures, and infuse into them its own life and complexion. It

is not by merely mechanical and formal distinctions, that we can hold ourselves always to the territory of one of these systems as distinguished from the other. What we are most concerned to understand, is the spirit or soul by which each is animated. Thus it often happens that all the processes by which a revival is carried forward, show themselves to be in fact pervaded with the false spirit of the Bench, at every point. But so far as that is the case, the revival itself ceases to be such, in the true sense of the term. It becomes a mere mock revival, a bastard imitation of the truth, the mushroom product of feeling and fancy, wrought into a compost of fanaticism, from which it shoots forth, as it were in the course of a single night, without substance or strength. In such case, the various forms of action which have been mentioned, may be so exhibited as to breathe throughout the spirit of the system represented by the Bench ; and there may be good reason for condemning the whole as quackery and wildfire. And no doubt it is owing to the frequent caricaturing to which revival measures have been thus subjected, more than to any other cause, that so strong a prejudice is found to prevail sometimes against every thing of the sort. But still such measures as have been mentioned are not, in their own nature, of the same complexion with the Anxious Bench. They spring from the very conception of a revival ; and no abuse to which they may happen to be subjected in the hands of revival-manufacturers, should be suffered to bring them

into discredit, under their legitimate form. They belong constitutionally to the system of the Catechism.

It was on this system emphatically the Reformers of the 16th century relied, in carrying forward the great work, for which they were raised up by the Spirit of God. It might be denominated indeed with great propriety, the system of the Reformation. Luther, Zuingli, Calvin, were all, in the fullest sense, men of the Catechism ; and it was in this character pre-eminently, they showed themselves so mighty and so successful, in laying the foundations, and rearing the superstructure, of that vast spiritual work which has since been associated with their names. They had ample opportunity, if they had seen proper to use it, for going to work by the other method. The age was ripe for agitation and commotion, in the name of religion, to any extent. Luther could have created a revival in this form, that would have made all Europe rock with whirlwind excitement. But he left such work to the Anabaptists ; or rather his giant strength was successfully opposed to it, in their hands. The Anabaptists were the men of the Bench, in that day. Luther belonged wholly to another school.

I cannot perhaps close the subject better, than by exhibiting a most interesting and instructive exemplification of the true character and force of the system now explained and recommended, as furnished from the history of the century following the Reformation in England, by the cel-

ebrated *Richard Baxter* and his parish of *Kidderminster*. Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and most of all, Scotland, present in their history innumerable attestations to the same point. But it is well to fix our attention for a moment, on a single case, peculiarly striking in its character, and more than commonly prominent through the world-wide reputation of the pastor.

Baxter, it is well known, lived in the most stormy period of English history, during which, for more than half a century, both Church and State might be said to rock perpetually, as with the earthquake throes of revolution. He was intimately connected, at the same time, with public affairs and public men, and deeply concerned in the political changes which were going forward. He was moreover a scholar and a writer, with such attachment to his books, and such a zeal in the use of his pen, as have characterised but few ministers in any age. Add to all this, he labored under such a complication of bodily infirmities and ailments, that one can hardly help wondering how he was able to do anything at all. It is distressing only to think over the catalogue of his disagreeable maladies, as they are presented in his life.

Kidderminster, when he began to preach there, was a most neglected, unpromising charge, like many others in England at that time. His predecessor had been a common tippler and drunkard, without any fitness whatever for his work. The congregation was large, but composed for the most part of ignorant, careless rough man-

the Catechism, and then examined them about the sense ; and lastly urged them with all possible engaging reason and vehemency, to answerable affection and practice. I spent about an hour with each family, and admitted no others to be present ; lest bashfulness should make it burthensome, or any should talk of the weakness of others. All the afternoons on Mondays and Tuesdays, I spent in this way.”

Such was the general method of Baxter’s ministry. It was constant, regular, earnest ; not marked with noise and parade ; but like the common processes of nature, silent rather, deep, and full of invisible power. He was a man of prayer, and his whole soul was in his work. Thus his ministrations were clothed with uncommon interest and force. Prejudice and opposition gradually gave way. The pastor became the centre of all hearts. In the end, the change was complete. We hear of no sudden general excitement, no pains taken to secure anything of that sort ; no *revival*, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, as denoting an occasional and transient awakening in the history of a church. But the life of religion in the place was constantly progressive, and the power of a quiet revival might be said to reign at Kidderminster all the time. The result was wonderful. “The congregation,” he says, “was usually full, so that we were fain to build about five galleries after my coming thither ; the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in. Our private

meetings also, were full. On the Lord's days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets; but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through them. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not one poor family in the side that did not so; and that did not by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst, being inns and ale-houses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious." The church numbered six hundred communicants; "of whom there were not twelve," says Baxter, "that I had not good hopes of as to their sincerity."

Most happy would it be for our Reformed German Church, if all her pastors could be engaged to lay to heart the weight of this great example. Let no one think within himself, that his circumstances make it impossible for him to work and prevail, in the same style. It would be hard to find among all our charges, a field so rough and unpromising as was the parish of Kidderminster, when first subjected to the labors of Baxter. And it is only the zeal and faithfulness of Baxter that are needed, to transform the worst among them, in the course of a few years, into the image, at least in part, of what Kidderminster was, when his ministry in the place was brought to a close. He has himself drawn a most stirring

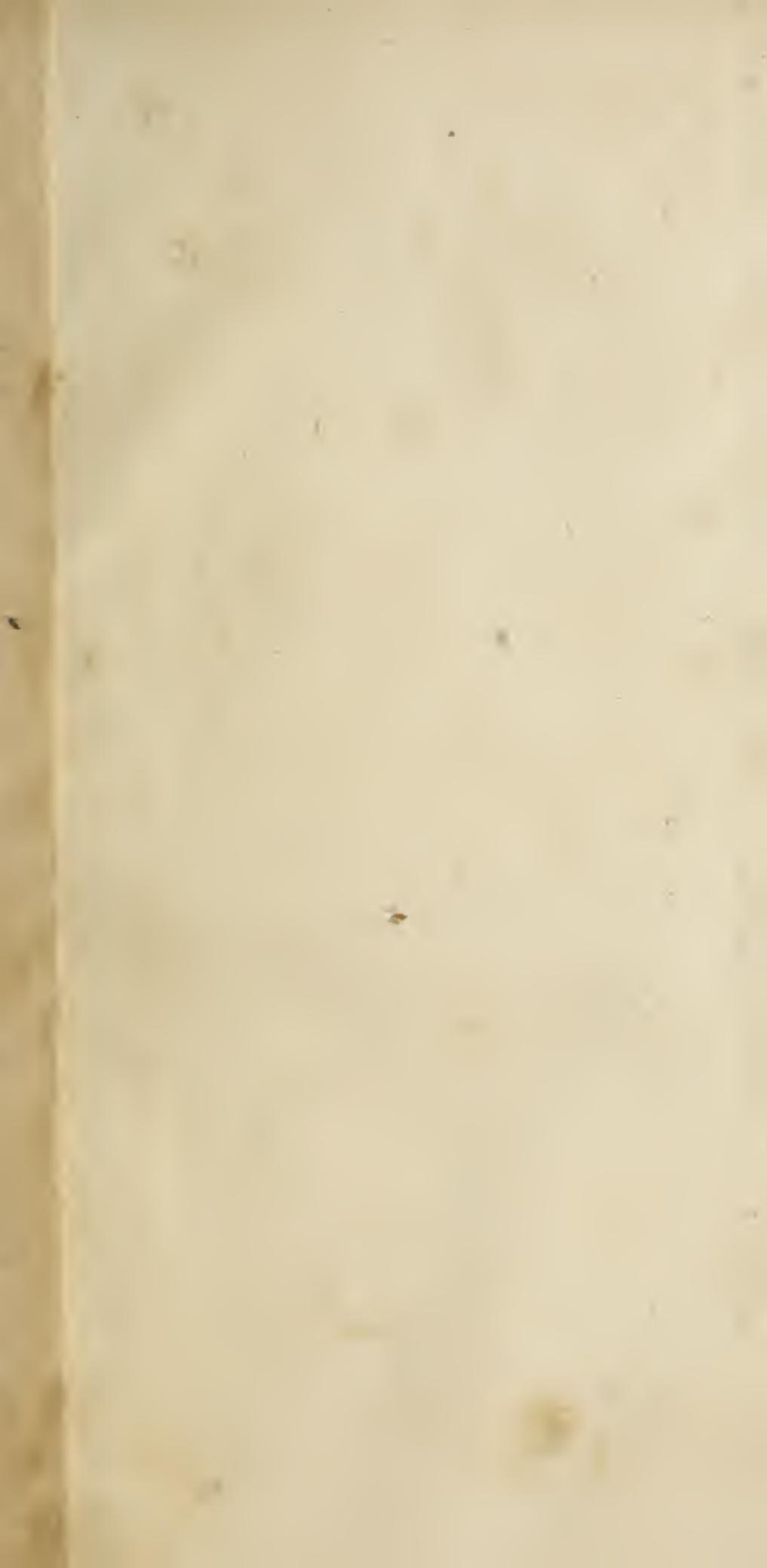
picture of what the pastor should be, in his small work entitled, “*GILDAS SALVIANUS: The Reformed Pastor; showing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechising.*” I consider it a privilege to close the present work, with a pointed reference to this most excellent publication. If any wish to see the **SYSTEM OF THE CATECHISM** explained and enforced, as with a pencil dipped in heavenly light, let them read Baxter’s “*Gildas Salvianus.*” One sentence of his own with regard to it should never be forgotten. “If God would but reform the ministry, and set them on their duties zealously and faithfully, the people would certainly be reformed: all churches either rise or fall, as the ministry doth rise or fall; not in riches and worldly grandeur, but in knowledge, zeal, and ability for the work.”

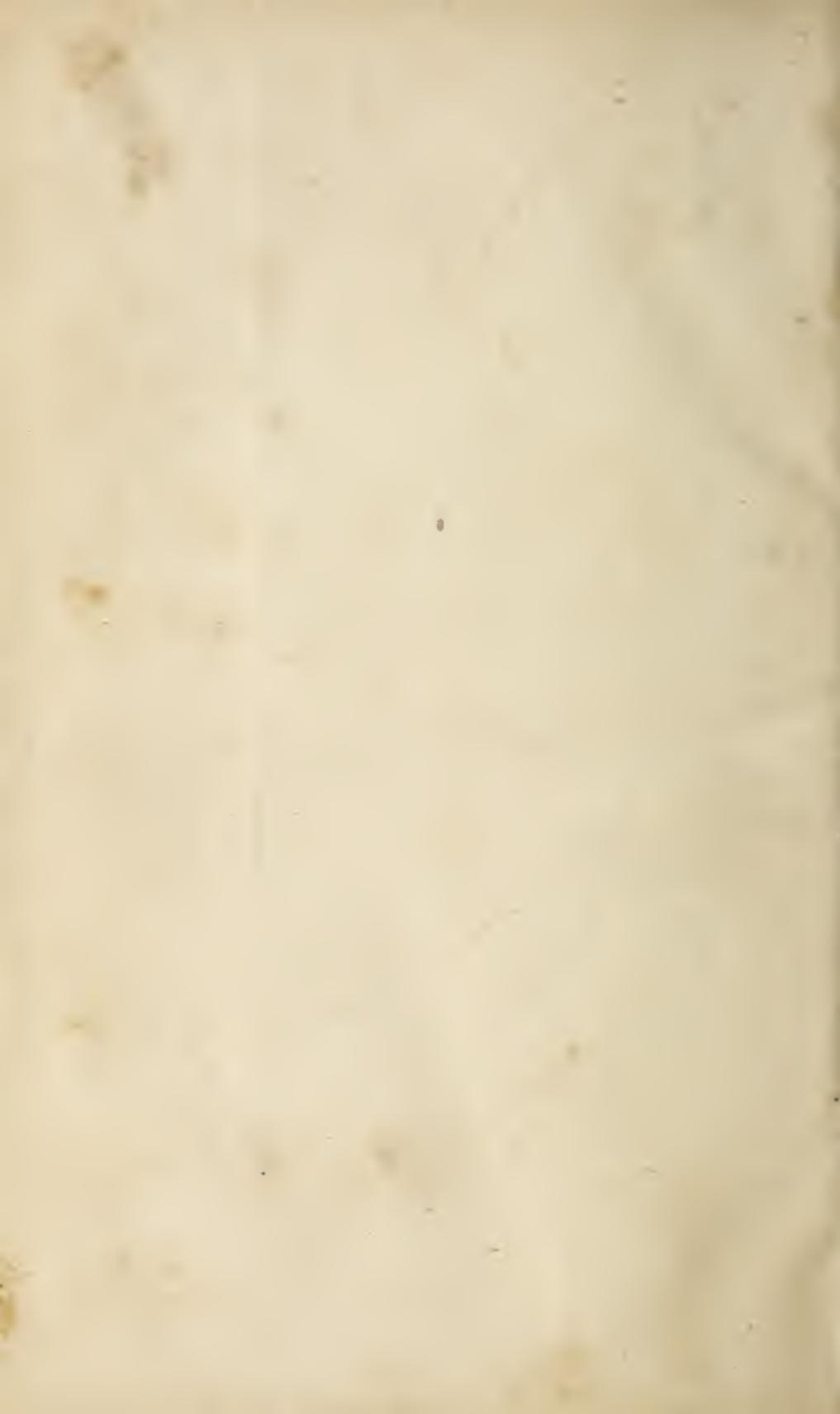
“*The Reformed Pastor*” says the distinguished Dr. Doddridge, “is a most extraordinary performance, and should be read by every young minister before he takes a people under his stated care; and, I think, the practical part of it reviewed every three or four years. For nothing would have a greater tendency to awaken the spirit of a minister to that zeal in his work, for want of which, many good men are but shadows of what, by the blessing of God, they might be, if the maxims and measures laid down in this incomparable treatise were strenuously pursued.”

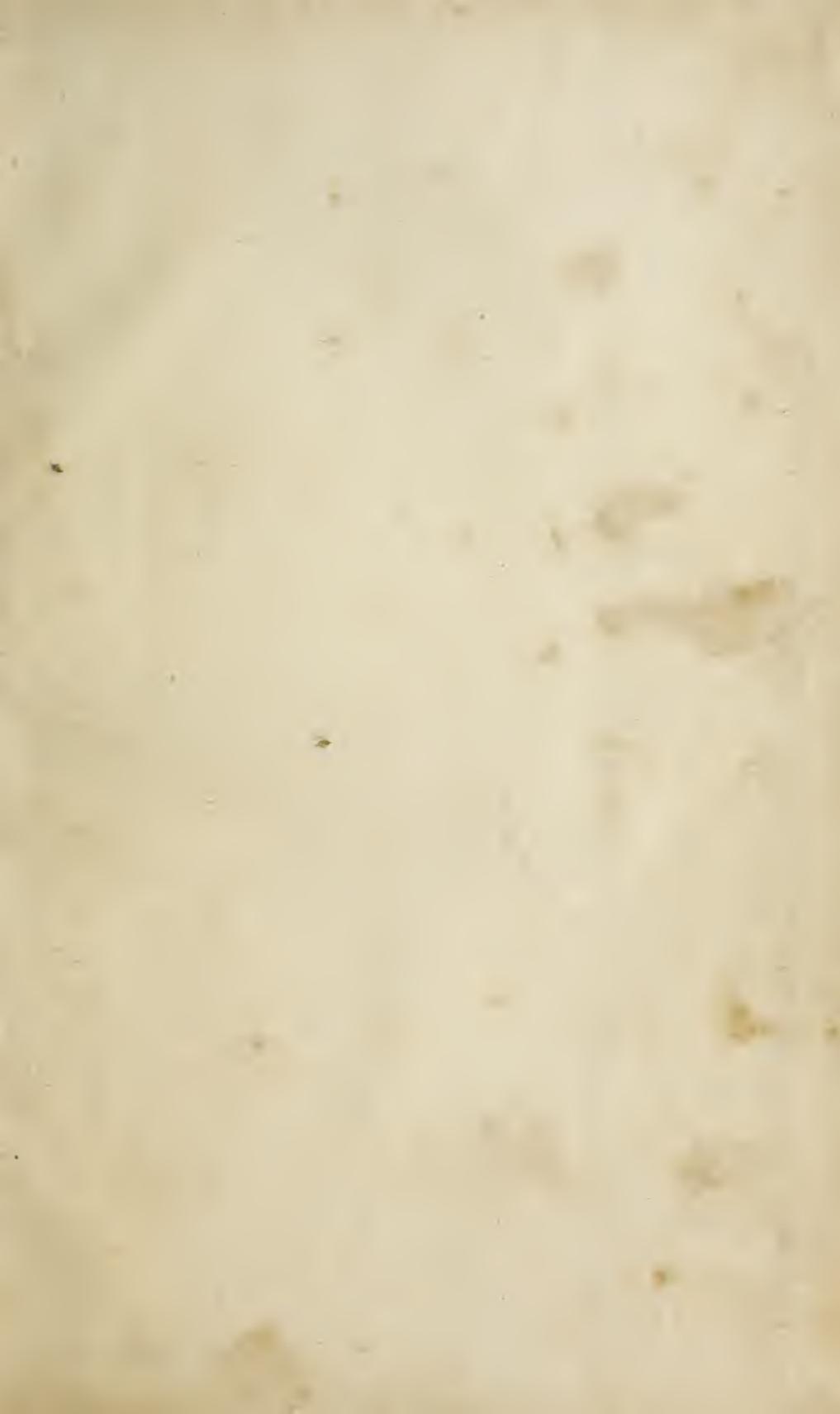
ERRATUM.—In the note on page 34 and 19th line from the bottom, read *Burchard* instead of *Blanchard*.













28-Wintergreen

51-Pot. quack

